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ENGLISH PEOPLE OF THE PAST

ENGLISH PEOPLE OF THE PAST

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL HISTORY

By M J WHICHER, B.A., and
R J MITCHELL, M.A., B.Litt

With Illustrations 8vo

Volume I To 1399

Volume II 1399-1603

Volume III 1603-1832

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An Introduction to Social History

by

M. J. WHICHER, B.A.(OXON)

and

R. J. MITCHELL, M.A., B.LITT.(OXON)

VOLUME III

1603-1832

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is an unpretentious history of ordinary people. The west country villages of the Woottons, and the market town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse and the people who live in them, are imaginary, but intended to be typical. In most cases the characters are taken from life, from the contemporary authorities cited at the end of the book.

All names printed in capitals represent historical characters, and only historical names appear in the index.

Wootton Courcy is intended to be the typical English village. The name Wootton is Saxon; Courcy is derived from the name of the Norman lord of the manor who was given the land at the Conquest.

Wootton Abbas village grew up at the gates of the Benedictine monastery, founded in the twelfth century. When the monastery was dissolved four hundred years later, the nave of the Abbey became the parish church and the land was sold to a 'new rich' layman.

Nether Wootton parish adjoins Wootton Courcy. It is low-lying and subject to floods; its inhabitants are poor, unenterprising, and unfortunate. Wootton-on-the-Hill is high up on the slopes of the Cotswolds. There is a windmill there, a stone-quarry, and a few small cottages.

Wootton-on-the-Fosse is an important country town; it lies on the Roman Fosse Way, and is built on the site of a Roman town. It was a centre of the woollen-trade before the Industrial Revolution ended the industrial supremacy of the west of England.

In order to adapt the book for use in schools it has been divided into three volumes, each designed to cover a year's work. Volume I is the easiest of the three, and aims at presenting broad outlines and picturesque detail. Volume II is intended to be a link between mediæval and modern times, and is chiefly concerned with details about industry and daily life. Volume III tries to give some idea of historical continuity, and traces the development of Parliamentary Government and the main causes and results of the Industrial Revolution.

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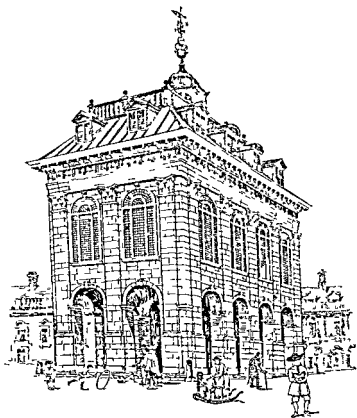
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THE TOWN HALL IN WOOTTON-ON-THE-FOSSE

CHAPTER I

A MANOR HOUSE IN THE REIGN OF JAMES I

"He always kept his greatness by his charity. . . . Anyone may know where he kept house, either by the chimney's smoke, by the freedom at gate . . . by the fire in the hall, or by the full furnished tables. . . . There are four sorts that pray for him; the poor, the passenger, his tenants, and servants. . . . He neither racks nor rakes his neighbours: they are sure of his company at church as well as at home."

(DONALD LUPTON, *London and the Countrey carbonadoed*, 1632.)

AT the beginning of the seventeenth century a new generation of Corbets was growing up at Wootton. Sir Roger had abandoned his seafaring life, and devoted himself to his family and his estate. He had two sons, Henry and Ralph, and a daughter, Lucy, all of whom were old enough to remember the death of QUEEN ELIZABETH. Sir Roger was on the best of terms with his cousins at Wootton Abbas, and his son Ralph was betrothed to Sir Richard's daughter Mary. Mary's brother Francis was a great friend of Ralph's, and the two boys were almost brought up together.

In the time of old Sir Edmund Corbet, neighbouring families had held somewhat aloof from Wootton Manor, not wishing to be suspected of heresy or disloyalty to the Queen. These now became friendly with the genial Sir Roger, since he was a Protestant. Dame Margaret excelled in the country by her splendid hospitality, as she had excelled at Court by her grace and wit. She thought nothing of a banquet to entertain some thirty or even forty people, lasting several hours. Nor did she hesitate to invite many of them to stay all night, for country houses had to serve then for hotels as well as homes. When people came by road from a distance, on horseback or in a springless coach, they expected several days' hospitality at least. They did not mind sleeping several in a room, nor even several in a bed.

It had not been without misgiving and a certain sense of disloyalty that Sir Roger had abandoned the traditions of his family, and taken his part in the English Service in Wootton

Church, even though he had learnt at sea a fierce hatred of Catholic Spain, and a deep loyalty to QUEEN ELIZABETH. The news of the Gunpowder Plot consoled him for his abandonment of the Catholic faith, for rebellion was abhorrent to him.

Sir Roger took the greatest interest in his sons, not only in Henry, but also in Ralph, and that at a time when younger brothers were considered much inferior to the heir. As soon as Ralph was old enough his father taught him to ride and to shoot, and was secretly proud of his skill. The Corbet children of that time were all, boys and girls alike, taught to ride on the aged Solomon, who had once belonged to their uncle, Hugh Corbet. Solomon had actually gone out with the Shire Militia in 1588, when he was a young and spirited grey. In his white old age, Ralph was taught to turn him at will, by laying his riding stick along his neck, and to make him walk sideways by a touch of his foot on his shoulder. When Solomon could jump ditch and fence without unseating Ralph, Sir Roger gave his son a black horse of his own. He said he would bring them both up together, and Ralph learnt to fire off a matchlock musket (and clean the barrel afterwards) every day when his horse was fed. It was the first step in soldiering for Ralph, and the horse grew accustomed to the noise of firing. Ralph had to know how to handle all the old suits of armour in the Manor, he was told to fix one up in Churcholm field and ride the black horse round it till he ceased to shy at the shining monstrous thing, and could at last be persuaded to knock it down. Sir Roger thought indifference to armour an important part of a horse's education, though with the coming of gunpowder mail was going out of fashion.

Skilled horsemanship was considered essential in the education of a gentleman, and if a man did not wish to be considered a rough country boor, he must also be skilled in the art of fencing. Ralph's first fencing lesson he long remembered as part of a particularly satisfactory day. He and Francis and Lucy could not have their usual Latin lesson with the old parson one morning, for he had had to ride away to visit a sick parishioner. Lucy was at once summoned to the kitchen, where her mother, Dame Margaret, was busy superintending the preparation of the dinner. She was glad to have Lucy, for she did not at all approve of Latin for girls, and set her to work learning how to cook a great

pike that Ralph and Francis had caught in the stream the day before. The two boys brought thyme and winter savoury and sweet marjoram from the garden to stuff their fish, and watched their mother chop the herbs and mix them with a whole pound of butter. Anchovies and oysters were added before the fish was filled and tied firmly to a spit with a dish



FISHING THE WOOTTON COURCY STREAM

beneath. Lucy had to watch it as it sizzled in front of the great log fire, and baste it with butter and claret wine. The boys were then told they might go and net some carp from the ponds in the herb-garden, as a special treat, for even a pike a yard long was not considered sufficient fish for the great dinner they were to eat later.¹

¹ Nowadays many people are too dainty to eat pike at all. But skilfully cooked, it can be very good. For recipes see Mrs Lucas's *French Cookery Book* (Christopher's, 1929).

Here Sir Roger found them and told them they should have a fencing lesson with him. He had learnt from the same fencing master in London as his cousin Giles,¹ and was considered a dangerous adversary. They were both rather young to learn, but enjoyed themselves nevertheless, and learnt something of how to stand, and thrust, and parry.

As they went in to dinner, Sir Roger said that when he had done with them they would be able to fight a duel, on horseback or on foot, and be sure to win, or they might go and fight the Spaniards in the Low Countries. It never occurred to him in that peaceful time that they would ever fight in earnest in their own country, and against each other.

The dinner they found worthy of the skill and reputation of the Lady of the Manor. It was served in the great hall, and the farm servants ate their meal at another table there, in the friendly, old-fashioned way. Ralph and Francis sat beside Sir Roger, and had to see he was well served before eating themselves. Lucy sat beside her mother, who kept a strict eye on her table manners. She was careful to wash her sticky fingers between every course, *in the bowls of rose water she had helped to make*. Not once did she sigh or grunt as she drank her cider.

The meal began with the fish, served with orange juice (it was most opportune that a case of these had recently arrived from London, as a great luxury) and with fresh salads, young shoots of mint, sage, marigold, and violet. Potage followed, and Francis began to feel very uncomfortable. He was not expected to speak unless he was spoken to, and he had left his silver spoon at home. A knife and fingers had done excellently for the first course, but potage, liberally fortified with broiled meat and vegetables, was a difficult matter. He gazed helplessly at his porringer—Dame Corbet was already too busy carving to notice him. He watched her skilfully holding the joint with a skewer, and carving off generous portions, till Sir Roger at length came to the rescue and ordered him a horn spoon. He soon finished his potage then, and was ready for the roast, and still had an appetite for the fruit pie which ended the meal. Sir Roger had promised to take the two boys out hawking with him, and Francis would have no other meal that day, save cold meats before he went to bed. Hawking was hungry work.

¹ See Volume II, Chapter XXIII

The meal over, Dame Margaret was glad to sit down quietly with her spinning-wheel; but she went out to the kitchens again at half-past five to prepare a posset for the evening meal. Sir Roger thought no one could make it as well as she could, and besides, Lucy must be carefully taught.

Lucy had just learnt how to separate the yolks and whites of eggs, and was trusted to prepare twenty yolks for the evening posset. Cream was brought from the dairies, and heated over a charcoal fire in a shining, three-legged skillet. A posset-pot, newly bought from a pedlar, was set to warm, and filled with sack. Dame Margaret herself poured the eggs into the cream, tasting it first to see that it had been well spiced with cinnamon. Stirring it till it thickened needed care and skill. Lucy was only allowed to watch, nor was she trusted to pour the rich yellow custard into the sack.

The family ate their supper in a small private room, for Sir Roger sometimes preferred this when he was tired. Francis left the Manor at seven o'clock, when thrifty village people were beginning to settle down for the night, and was thrashed by an anxious father for keeping such late hours. On the whole, he thought his day was worth it, and Sir Roger had said he would give him a bar-tailed falcon of his own.

A strange tragedy saddened the last years of Sir Roger's life. He had been made a Justice of the Peace, and had supported the village overseer of the poor when he had requested that two women, idle beggars of the parish, should be sternly dealt with. They were whipped and set in the stocks, in the brutal fashion of that day, and Sir Roger sternly forbade his kindly wife to give them further alms at the gate, as had been her daily custom.

When Dame Corbet accordingly refused them, saying they must do the work the overseer had provided for them, they were very angry. Henry happened to be with his mother, and one woman looked sideways at him, and began to mutter strange curses. Sir Roger said it was nonsense when his wife came to him and declared that their son had been overlooked and cursed by a veritable witch. But he thought anxiously of stories he had heard, and the amazing number of witches that had recently been discovered and put to death.

Three days later Henry fell ill. All Dame Margaret's herbs and all her care of him seemed to do no good, the strange fever increased. Every one whispered to each other "witches," and no one ventured abroad after dark. When Ralph fell ill too the case against the witches seemed proved. Broadrib, the village constable at that time, went with several men to capture them, and seeing a hare run away from their lonely cottage door, made no doubt but that he had seen the devil in disguise.

The women were roughly dragged away, thrown into prison, and tried for witchcraft. There was no one to speak a good word for them, though they had cured many a sick person in the village in the past with cunning remedies, and both were sentenced to death.

Dame Margaret had hoped that their punishment might save the life of their sons, but Henry died within seven days of falling ill. Ralph slowly recovered, and within six months seemed strong again. He was now an only son, and though Sir Roger would gladly have kept him in Wootton, he thought his heir should have a wider experience of the world. He determined to send him to Court, and when a household was formed for the young PRINCE CHARLES, Ralph became a member of it. Sir Roger rode up to London with him, and returned very sadly alone to Wootton.

CHAPTER II

AN ENGLISH VILLAGE, 1603-1625

*"Those whom we call yeomen, next unto the nobility, knights, and squires, have the greatest charge and doings in the commonwealth. . . . I call him a yeoman which is a freeman born English, and may dispend of his own free land in yearly revenue to the sum of forty shillings sterling. . . ."*¹

(SIR THOMAS SMITH, *The Commonwealth of England*, 1589.)

MAY Morning, early in the reign of James I, and not too cold for the time of year. It was scarcely light, but every one in the village of Wootton Courcy was awake, busy with that necessary work which cannot be left undone, even on an important holiday, and making preparations for the great day.

Along the road from Wootton Abbas a pony came at a cheerful canter, ridden by Francis Corbet, then a boy of about ten. He rode under the gate-house of the manor and dismounted in the courtyard. He looked round anxiously for his cousin Ralph, and was relieved to find he had not yet started. Ralph was four years older than Francis, and had graciously said that if he were in time Francis might come with him on May Morning to the woods. For it was the custom on that day to go out early and bring back a tall young tree in splendid procession.

Centuries earlier, before Christianity was known in England, or indeed in Europe, May Day had been an important religious festival, celebrating the return of Spring. The Spirit of Life, in the form of a green tree, was brought into the villages and there worshipped. The people thought that this would ensure life to themselves and to their crops and animals, on which their lives depended. This old pagan religion had long been forgotten, but some of the old ceremonies survived. To omit them would have been thought most unlucky, and so the people of Wootton still brought in their tree and still did it honour and danced round it.

As Francis tied up his pony, he saw Sir Roger's great white

¹ The end of this description of a yeoman is quoted in Chapter IX.

oxen being yoked together, two by two. When Tom Tucker, one of Sir Roger's men, led them out of the courtyard and across the fallow field, other pairs of oxen belonging to the villagers joined them, till it was clear that the team of oxen which would at last draw home the tree would be fully as long as the tree itself.

Ralph and Francis hurried on ahead to collect branches. The May was not yet out, but blackthorn made a good show in spite of its leafless boughs. Ruthlessly they tore down great branches to carry home, and to tie on to the wide horns of the oxen.

The great moment had come when the tree was felled and ready to be dragged back. The piper started a tune, the morris dancers began their dance, Tom goaded the oxen, the dairymaids laughed and screamed, and the whole procession started for home. As they came down the village street Tom leapt aside for a moment to plant a branch in front of a doorway, and many other men did the same, for it was considered lucky to bring in a green bush on May Morning, so Tom placed his at the door of the house where lived the girl he hoped to marry. The tree was brought to the village green and there set up. When it was securely planted, every man had found himself a girl, and a dance began round it. The village children had to keep out of the way, but later, when other amusements had attracted the grown-up people, they would copy the dances they had seen, that they might take their share in honouring the maypole and know how to dance round it when they grew up.

Later in the day came a wonderful morris dance, not only down the village street, but through every house. This year there was an unexpected check to the progress of the jingling dancers.

Sam Allbones, nicknamed Solemn Sam, stood at the door of his cottage, with no friendly and laughing invitation, but barring the way and scowling terribly. Francis and Ralph suddenly realized that the strange creature meant to refuse entrance to the cheerful dancers, for they heard him shout out something about worshippers of idols, before he slammed the door against them. This was no effective barrier to the dancers, whose muscles were hardened by ploughing and reaping and threshing and wrestling. After a short pause they crashed into the low living-room of Sam's cottage, and emerged carrying Sam with them. They took him to the pond

on the village green, tied him in the ducking-stool, and dipped him twice in the icy water. This was considered a rare joke by the villagers, but it did nothing to cure Sam of his hatred for May Day. He retired cold and bruised to his cottage and was seen no more for that day, but he will be heard of again in later chapters.

After the midday meal, the play of *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* was always acted on the village green, and Sir Roger came with the two boys to watch. Ralph's sister, Lucy, cried because she was not allowed to see it too; it was her second disappointment that day, for her parents had already exclaimed in horror at the idea of her going out early to the woods. Such an adventure was quite unsuitable for a girl.

Sir Roger had seen the play many times when he was a boy, before he went to sea. Only the actors had changed. He remembered seeing his man Tom's grandfather, another Tom Tucker, act the part of Robin Hood, before young Tom was born. Ralph knew some of the play by heart, because Tom would sometimes quote bits of it to him. Some of it was very amusing, but some lines did not seem very sensible. Ralph said as much to Tom, who only said: "Well, that's how it was told me by father; I've never heard it different." There was no appeal from this, for the play had never been written down. It was fortunate that the actors' memories were so good, for they did not often go badly wrong. Yet it was not really the words, or the plot, but the fighting and the practical jokes in the play that were most important. Even Henry Corbet, Ralph's elder brother, who had been to the Swan in London and seen real players, and real masques too in Whitehall, enjoyed the contests between Robin Hood and Friar Tuck, and did not scorn to watch.

Everybody waited expectantly when burly Thomas Ayedrunken, the innkeeper, came swaggering along as Friar Tuck, boasting of his bravery, and scorning Robin Hood.

"If he speak any words to me
He shall have stripes two or three
That shall make his body smart,"

he shouted, waving his stick. Soon the two were fighting, and Friar Tuck was thrown down. Robin Hood's men came and joined the mêlée, and the villagers shouted themselves hoarse.

The next scene never failed to please. Robin Hood said he would be merciful to the vanquished Friar Tuck if he would but carry him across the river. The Wootton Courcy stream ran conveniently across the green, and did duty for a river. Friar Tuck always dropped Robin Hood in the middle of the stream, and Tom Tucker, as Robin, was always most concerned to avoid being dropped on his back. He had escaped the year previously, but Ayedrunken did not mean him to be so lucky again. He held Tom's leg high in the air till he fell with such a splash that the water came flying over Francis and Ralph and Sir Roger too, who were all enjoying themselves as much as anyone.

When the play was done, and the sword dance that followed it, Sir Roger took Ralph away and ordered Francis home. He knew that the villagers would keep up their revelling all night, and grow more and more wild and excited. He himself was glad to go home to his fireside, for he was getting old and felt the evening air.

May Day over, the working-life of the village of Wootton Courcy was resumed. Tom Tucker, no longer Robin Hood, but farm-servant to Sir Roger Corbet, was about on 2nd May soon after sunrise, though his head was heavy from the night's carouse in the ale-house.

He worked hard about the farm and in the fields, and when Sir Roger's work was done found time to visit his own few sheep on the upland common, and to see how the row of stone cottages, then in building, was progressing.

These were replacing very old timber-framed cottages, recently burnt, that belonged to a period when the difficult art of building in stone was less well understood than in the seventeenth century. Tom took a special interest in one of these, for Sir Roger had promised him he should live in it when he was married, as he soon hoped to be, to Jane Elworthy. Tom was the youngest son of old Tom Tucker, and he inherited no share in the common arable and pasture of the village, though, like every yeoman, cottager, and squatter, he could drive any beasts he possessed on to the common waste. With this asset, a knowledge of carpentry learnt in his father's shop, and the experience of Sir Roger's farm with its 4s a week, he hoped to make his way and establish himself

To live in a new stone cottage with glass in the window and a stone floor, was his first step up. He dreamed of becoming bailiff to Sir Roger, saving money, renting land, and becoming at last a small, independent farmer.

Tom was always glad in those days when it rained so hard that farm work was impracticable. Whenever he had leisure he worked on his own settle for his own fireside. His father provided the well-seasoned oak for the purpose, and had himself made the



ROGER'S ROW IN WOOTTON COURCY

door and built in the lintels, and the chestnut beams for the ceiling of the living-room, and the floor of the one bedroom.

Father and son between them were indeed making all the furniture the little cottage needed. A solid oak table and benches, a stool for Jane when she used her spinning-wheel, and an oak chest, on which Tom carved T. T. 1611, completed the furniture for the living-room. The solid four-poster oak bed, built in the room upstairs, which could never have been taken out of the window or down the ladder except in pieces, was their greatest joy. Tom had always at home slept on straw, and a truckle bed in the servants' room in the Manor House was a luxury. But he had been so impressed by a sight of Sir Roger's great carved bed that he determined he would have a four-poster too,

with a roof to it, and being a carpenter's son, could indulge his extravagant fancy

Francis and Ralph, when they could escape from their Latin with the parson, also watched the building of the cottages, and had taken the deepest interest in the whole proceedings from the day when the first loads of stone were brought from the quarry on the hill, and the stone paving laid down on the bare earth for the cottage floors. While the thick walls were being made, the old village slater was busy with the preparation of his stone slates, and his work began too on the hill. Tom had no time for such expeditions, but Ralph and Francis had seen the special stone for the slater's purpose quarried and set aside on the hill, for the frost to do the work of splitting it into the thin slates he needed. When these had been trimmed to size and a hole bored in each, they were ready to put in place on the roof. The ridge-cresting for the top of the roof had to be cut to the right shape. This took a long time, and the noise of the saw frightened the sheep and the cows. The slater used a toothless saw for the work, and put gritty sand under the strong blade which slowly cut into the hard stone.

They were finished at last, even to the iron hooks in the chimney, where the iron pot would hang and the sides of bacon be cured, and the little panes of glass leaded into the windows by the glazier from Wootton-on-the-Fosse. The whole village, not excepting Sir Roger, was immensely proud. They were a model for all new cottages for generations, and when it is remembered that the skill of west country builders in Cotswold stone became famous in London itself, their pride in them was perhaps not ill-founded.

Before the cottages were finished, and Tom had married Jane, Ralph had already set off with his father on horseback to London to begin his new life at Court. He had to wait a long time before he saw Tom's cottage inhabited, with a horseshoe on the door to keep away witches, mistletoe from the rafters to ward off lightning, and a hooded oaken cradle near the fire to hold his first baby.

Jane was very happy in her new home, and content to work as hard as Tom did. She was as proud of her deep, satisfying cupboards in the sixteen-foot wall as Dame Corbet of her still-room. She had been a maid at the Manor before her marriage, and had

learnt a great deal from her mistress about brewing and baking, which was very useful to her. Tom certainly appreciated the stews she gave him, and the bread baked in the stick oven in the wall, with its good taste of wood-smoke on the dark crust. Her housework was only the beginning of her activity. She worked hard in the garden too, and at night when Tom was half asleep on his settle in the chimney, with his Black Jack ¹ full of Jane's cider beside him, she would be hard at work spinning by firelight, for the weaver in Wootton-on-the-Fosse came every week to the village to buy yarn. At sheep-shearing she would go up to the Manor to help Dame Corbet, who had much ado to feed all the men who came to help; and at harvest her own family, the Elworthys, and the Tuckers were glad to have her help all day to bind the sheaves. Harvest was hard work, but friendly, and she enjoyed dancing by moonlight when the oxen had carried home the last load. No one seemed too tired to enjoy that. . . .

Tom was made bailiff to Sir Roger just before the old man died, and Ralph was glad to keep so good a friend as his servant. After some years he had saved enough money to rent some land, which he farmed with the help of his children, and so became a person of some importance in the village. It was a great comfort to Tom and Jane as they grew older, that they could provide for all their children, and need never be afraid of becoming a burden to them, nor of "coming on the parish" when they were feeble.

¹ A jug made of leather.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

"I would hope to live to do good service both to Church and Commonwealth"

(Autobiography of Sir Simonds D'Ewes)

ONLY one son, Francis, was born to Sir Richard Corbet, M P , and his father brought the boy up sternly and well. Every day he took his great Bible from his carved Bible-box and read prayers to his assembled family, as the new custom then was in Protestant England. Every day, when the Bible had been carefully replaced, he questioned his son closely to make sure he had been listening. In 1611 he gave him a copy of the new translation of the Bible known as the Authorized Version. This Francis found easier to understand than the version on which he had been brought up, for the new Bible was written in the English that he heard spoken round him. Richard Corbet understood that Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, gave sound Protestant teaching to the undergraduates, and this he valued above Latin and Greek. To Cambridge he determined Francis should go as soon as he was old enough.

Richard Corbet also determined that his only son should be well fitted to take his place in the shire as Justice of the Peace, or to serve as Member of Parliament if he should be chosen. For this a sound knowledge of law was essential, and he entered his name at the Middle Temple, the Inn of Court to which he himself belonged.

Before Francis could go either to Cambridge or the Inns of Court he had to learn Latin, and for this purpose was sent, about the time that his cousin Ralph went to London, to the excellent Grammar School at Wootton-on-the-Fosse. It was extremely fortunate for him, considering his father's ambition for his future, that he did not find learning difficult. Clearly he had inherited the scholarly tastes of his Uncle Peter, without his brilliance or

his wild disposition.¹ Francis was quite prepared to follow the career his father had planned for him.

At school he became a great friend of Simon Fletcher (son of his father's tenant, who farmed the Manor of Nether Wootton.) Young Simon had been found a most incompetent ploughman, but made an excellent Latin scholar. John Midwinter, the clothier, sent his sons too, and one of these, another John, was the same age as Francis and Simon, and friendly with them.

Big boys and small boys all learnt together in a great school-room. The headmaster sat at one end, and an usher with a birch walked up and down to keep order. There were six forms for the boys to sit on, and the top boys sat on the sixth form. Francis did not arrive at the top form as soon as Simon did, and John never arrived at all. When Francis had been at school four years, and was sixteen, his father arranged for him to go to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. He chose this college because of the reputed sternness of the master, who was said to thrash his scholars if they could not answer his questions about the Sunday sermons. OLIVER CROMWELL was entered at the same college in the same year, 1616.

Simon had long wished to go to Cambridge, but his father could not pay the fees. After some discussion it was arranged that he should go as a subsizar or scholar. His position would resemble that of a page to a knight, and he was well content to wait upon Francis, or another fellow-commoner, in return for this opportunity of education.

Sir Richard saw his son's tutor on arrival at Cambridge, whither they rode, the journey taking nearly a week. Francis' allowance was settled at £65 a year, which the tutor considered adequate, and even generous, for all expenses, fees, board and lodging, clothes, books, and travelling. He saw the man who was to share his son's rooms with him, and was glad to note that he was as strong and broad-shouldered as Francis. The two, he thought, should give a good account of themselves, in case of robbery or violence by night.

Simon lived out of College in his first year. As subsizar it was his duty to call Francis in the morning, which necessitated early rising and some haste. One dark morning, soon after their arrival,

¹ See Volume II, Chapter XXIV.

his hurry nearly ended the history of Simon altogether. He thought he would like some water to wash his hands, or even perhaps his face. He learnt that the sole water-supply for the street where he lived was a neighbouring well (a state of things which surprised him not at all) and was told that he would find the water excellent. He was not, however, clear how to set about getting it. Hauling up the heavy bucket was a tiresome business, it was a frosty morning and the ground slippery. Just before the bucket reached the top, Simon lost his balance and disappeared into the cold depths of the well. He had not even time to shout. Someone caught a glimpse of him as he disappeared, and with considerable difficulty he was finally rescued. Francis did not reach his tutor's room for his early coaching till nearly eight o'clock, and Simon never arrived at all, being in bed with a hot sack posset inside him.

During his first week at Cambridge Francis did very little work, being taken up with exploring the place and finding out what interests and amusements it offered. There were tennis courts, he found, and opportunities of fencing, hawking, and hunting too. One day he heard there was to be a game of football, a game disapproved of by authority, but much enjoyed by freshmen, and not least by OLIVER CROMWELL. Any number of people could play in this fierce old game, and it was, he found, the custom in Cambridge for half the colleges to challenge the other half. Francis and Simon had often played at home, after the autumn pig-killing, using a pig's bladder blown up for a ball. They were both early at the place where the game was to begin, being anxious to take their bearings in the new country over which they were to play.

The game seemed long in beginning, and there was no sign of the opponents, and at last someone declared that they were afraid to show themselves because so many in the last game had had broken heads and shins and noses. At last the team to which Francis and Simon belonged decided to visit the cowardly colleges. Seizing staves they rushed to the nearest, battered down the gates, and fell upon all the men they chanced upon inside. This was almost as good as football, Francis thought, he was thoroughly enjoying himself. But just then a gigantic and angry scholar bore down upon him in the doorway of the rival college. Francis

was no match for him, and being thrown, fell with his head against the stone wall.

He never knew exactly how the affair had ended, save that later his tutor told him he had paid a fine on his behalf, and that no one had been actually killed.

Francis was carried home with the help of the anxious Simon, who thought he was dead or dying. When at last he opened his eyes two days later he saw two men bending over him, talking earnestly. One of them held a knife. Francis thought wildly that he was about to be robbed or murdered; he began to struggle, and found his arms were tied. His shouts for help were answered only by men who came to help hold him down, and the man with the knife stooped over him again. When the villain straightened himself Francis saw in his hand long, matted strands of his own hair, and realized that he was being shaved. He also realized that his head was aching fiercely, and remembered how he had come by that. He was clear at last that the supposed murderer was a surgeon. As no one had ever heard then of gas or chloroform or aseptic methods, this discovery alarmed him yet more.

The surgeon had intended to cut away a piece of bone which he thought might be pressing on his patient's brain, and causing his prolonged unconsciousness. He was, fortunately for Francis, not anxious to perform so delicate an operation on a struggling patient, and so desisted. Francis recovered in time, and was never any the worse.

As soon as he was convalescent, and once again eager for amusement, Francis walked out to a neighbouring village where a bull-baiting was going to be held. This sport was beginning to be thought cruel, and JAMES I (himself much addicted to cock-fighting) had expressly condemned it in the *Book of Sports* he had recently issued for his people. Simon refused to go with Francis, for he was becoming very serious in his opinions, but Francis loved the excitement and determined to enjoy himself. He had his walk for nothing, however, because the Cambridge authorities heard of the proposed entertainment. The bull-master, afraid of the law, moved hastily away to a less law-abiding district.

Finally Francis decided to do some work, though he was never

enthusiastic about the philosophy, logic, and rhetoric which were still, as in the Middle Ages, an important part of Cambridge studies. He was expected to attend disputations in the schools, or in the chapel of his own college, and was on occasion obliged to take part in them himself. The language of these disputations was always Latin, and in spite of the insistence on Greek by ERASMUS and his friends in the previous century, Francis learned very little. He went to see a Greek Tutor, who received him with his hat on his head and his feet on the table, and decided that the extra expense and work involved was not worth while. Had he gone to Oxford and not to Cambridge (and in particular to Corpus Christi College, Oxford) Greek would certainly have been less neglected.

For his own amusement he read HOLINSHED'S *Chronicles*, which SHAKESPEARE had used for his history plays, some of which Francis had seen acted by strolling players. He gradually accumulated a store of historical knowledge which was to stand him in good stead in later life. For, in the great struggle between King and Parliament, both sides were constantly referring to the past to justify their own views about good government.

In 1618, when he had been at Cambridge for two years, his father came to see him, and Francis guessed something important was about to happen. He was not surprised to learn that a marriage had been arranged for him, for he was eighteen and still a bachelor. His father had chosen an heiress for him, who lived near Huntingdon with her grandmother. To his great relief, Francis found on meeting this lady Elizabeth that he liked her very much indeed. He was much disturbed when his father told him he was having difficulties about the marriage settlement, and that nothing might come of the marriage after all.

This had already happened twice before, but on neither occasion had Francis seen the bride. He was much relieved when the fierce old grandmother and his father at last came to terms. He made ready to return to Cambridge for a final year, a married man, whilst Elizabeth remained in her own home to finish her education, but his father said he had been there long enough and must now go to the Middle Temple to study law.

He was sorry to leave Cambridge, but glad to find that OLIVER CROMWELL was about to go to London for the same purpose.

as himself. He saw less of him than he had hoped, however, for CROMWELL'S name was entered at Lincoln's Inn. They remained friendly, however, and met again in the Long Parliament some twenty years later.

Of Simon, Francis saw little for several years after he left Cambridge. Simon had become very serious indeed in his last year there. He never wore gaily coloured clothes, he would not ring church bells (a popular amusement then) nor watch plays, nor dance, and he cut his hair as short as he could. Francis thought this made his head look very odd and round, and was not surprised when men laughed at Simon and called him a Puritan. (This in the early seventeenth century was worse than calling a man a "rogue" or a woman a "witch"; and both of these were very abusive indeed.) Francis himself came to be called a Puritan in later years, though he was never an extremist. He wore his hair at this time carefully curled and falling to his shoulders, and kept it so all his life, even when he became a soldier.

Francis became really interested in the study of law, and went daily to the law courts and made notes of cases. He saw a great deal of Ralph and of his twin sister Mary, now Ralph's wife, who lived in Drury Lane. When he had been in London a year, his wife was allowed to join him, and he too took a London house, where he lived till his father's death obliged him to move to Wootton Abbas.

CHAPTER IV

KING, COURT, AND PARLIAMENT

" To ride comely to shoot fair in bow or surely in gun, to vault lustily, to run to wrestle, to swim, to dance comely, to sing and play of instruments cunningly, to hawk to hunt, to play at tennis and all pastimes containing either some fit exercise for war or some pleasant pastime for peace, be not only comely and decent, but also very necessary, for a courtly gentleman to use "

(ROGER ASCHAM, *The Scholemaster*, 1570)

IN 1618, Ralph Corbet was an "accomplished gentleman" in the household of PRINCE CHARLES. He had visited as an esquire the Courts of France and Spain, had been made a Knight of the Bath, was a famous swordsman and horseman, and was reputed to have fought as many duels, at home and abroad, as any man at the Court of KING JAMES. He had married Mary Corbet, daughter of Sir Richard Corbet of Wootton Abbas, in 1613. A daughter was born in 1615, and a son in 1616, and twin daughters in 1618. Sir Roger only lived long enough to be glad that his only son had an heir, and died leaving to young Sir Ralph, Wootton Manor, with its attendant responsibilities and anxieties. Fortunately for his career at Court, Sir Roger's trusty bailiff, Tom Tucker, and his own capable mother, Dame Margaret, seemed well able to manage the estate, keep his tenants in order, and receive his rents regularly.

Mary Corbet was persuaded to leave her children with her mother-in-law and live in Drury Lane with her husband, in a house herented there¹. She enjoyed London life and the gay masques and balls to which Ralph took her, and he was very proud of her, but she had often to be alone when Ralph was occupied at Court in the service of PRINCE CHARLES, and was very glad when her twin brother Francis came to London from Cambridge to study law in the Middle Temple.

The old friendship between Ralph and Francis was now

¹ The rent was high, £50 a year

renewed. Ralph was glad to take Francis to Whitehall, to have him presented to PRINCE CHARLES, to point out the unpopular DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, and the detested Spaniard, GONDOMAR, as he had once been to take him out to the woods on a May morning, or to have a mock duel with him in Churcholm field.

On one occasion they were in the city, and decided to climb St. Paul's tower to see the city and the Thames valley at a glance. It was a clear day and a high tide and they could see the broad winding river for many miles, and shining glimpses of the lesser streams that joined it. Francis said that if he were Archbishop of Canterbury he would live on the hills of Hampstead and not among the flooded marshes of Lambeth, that they could see below; but Ralph said that the head of the Church must be close to the seat of government. From Lambeth he could come to Westminster in a few minutes in his coach by the horse-ferry or by boat. Looking eastward they could see the Tower and London Bridge¹ and the ships in the dock, and westwards the Houses of Parliament, and the Abbey and the Royal Palace of Whitehall.

The vast size of London seemed wonderful to Francis, for the city had long ceased to be entirely confined within the mediæval walls, and the Strand which joined London to the city of Westminster was lined with houses all the way. They will be like one city in time, he thought.²

It was clear enough for Ralph to point out the Tilt Yard at



MARY CORBET IN HER COURT DRESS

¹ There is a picture of old London Bridge in Volume II.

² A good idea of the London Francis gazed at from St. Paul's is given on the map of Middlesex in the Atlas of JOHN SPEED which had then recently been published. It is printed here as an end-paper. (In addition to the map of the county, there are, in the original, inset plans of London and Westminster, and views of Westminster Abbey and old St Paul's.)

Whitehall, and the Cockpit-in-Court (a favourite resort of KING JAMES), and a half-built stone rectangle which was, he said, a banqueting hall, and was designed in the Italian style by a young architect called INIGO JONES. Ralph had seen his plans for a new palace at Whitehall to replace the present one, which was built in the barbarous manner of the reign of KING HENRY VII, and held to be unworthy of kingly dignity. He added that he thought that Parliament would never grant the King enough money for that, and that he knew the King could not afford to build it unaided. Francis had a bird's-eye view of the Temple, and made out the very court where he had rooms. He could see the Law Courts and the Round Church of the Templars, and minute people coming and going at Temple Stairs, where he himself was accustomed to take boat to visit SIR ROBERT COTTON's house near Westminster. He could see SIR ROBERT's boats at the end of his garden looking like a bunch of razor-shells at that distance. He began telling Ralph about SIR ROBERT's wonderful library, and how, through a friend at the Temple, SIMONDS D'EWES, he was able to read there, but Ralph was not listening. He did not share Francis' passion for Parliamentary history, nor could he understand why he spent his time not only in the Law Courts making notes of cases, and reading law books, but among the records of the Tower and the Court of the Exchequer, as if he aimed at becoming the Lord Chancellor himself. Many of Ralph's own friends at the Law Courts spent their time in fencing and singing and dancing and riding, as he himself had done at Court, and their most strenuous activities had been the arrangement of those masques and pageants, for which the law societies were famous.

On the way home, in Holborn, they came on a great crowd cheering and shouting and booing. Soldiers had in charge a young apprentice and were trying to disperse the crowd, the Spanish Ambassador, GONDOMAR, was being hurried from his horse litter into his strongly guarded house. Ralph encountered a Catholic friend, who, in spite of the laws against recusants, said openly to them that he had just come from Mass in the Ambassador's house. He told them that the apprentice had been throwing stones at the Ambassador, and had thereby made himself very popular with the crowd.

Francis was glad to hear later that the apprentice had been

released; it would seem that KING JAMES did not want to make a martyr of him, or thought that the Spanish marriage he desired so earnestly for his son CHARLES was already causing sufficient disturbance among his subjects. He issued a proclamation at this time forbidding people to discuss affairs of State; but it never seemed to occur to him that hostility or unpopularity in the city or even in Parliament could ever become a real danger.

Not long after this, in a storm of popular indignation in which Francis shared, PRINCE CHARLES and the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM were sent to Spain, and Ralph accompanied them. Francis took Mary home to Wootton. Whilst he was there his father, Sir Richard Corbet, died, so Francis did not return to his rooms in the Temple, but settled down to look after his estate. Among his father's papers he found some notes taken by him during sessions of Elizabethan Parliaments which he studied with care, for he intended to stand as a Member of Parliament himself at some future date.

In 1625, Ralph and Mary were back in London again, Ralph much occupied with preparations for the Coronation of KING CHARLES. The Coronation ceremony was arranged by WILLIAM LAUD, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. In its splendour and dignity it seemed a fitting beginning to the reign of the new King, who was known to be a loyal son of the Anglican Church.¹

With the accession of KING CHARLES a change was noticed in the conduct of royal services. WILLIAM LAUD sent a message to the King respectfully, but firmly, requesting that he should be in time for service in the Chapel Royal; and stating that the worship of God would not in future be interrupted by the arrival of an earthly king.

At this time the Court became a centre for artists, and when Ralph was sent abroad on diplomatic missions he was commissioned by the King to buy pictures for the royal collection. The King acquired in this way masterpieces by TITIAN, CORREGGIO, RAPHAEL, and MICHAEL ANGELO, and was eager for any artistic treasures from Italy or ancient Greece.

It was in this world that young Hugh Corbet grew up, for he

¹ The Coronation service has been made the model for all Coronations ever since. See also Volume II, Chapter I.

became at eleven years old a page of the QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA (a French princess and not a Spaniard, for all the diplomacy of KING JAMES) and had his portrait painted by the Dutch artist VANDYKE, to be hung in the great hall at Wootton Courcy Manor. He was aware that many people in England were suspicious and critical of the King and his Court. They feared the elaborate church services the King loved, and the influence of the Catholic Queen. He heard how one, PRYNNE, had had his ears cropped for writing a book attacking the frivolity of the Court, and the acting of women in Court masques. The King had had him punished severely, for the Queen often appeared in masques herself. Hugh knew that some people even thought the King's love of art and letters vain, frivolous, and extravagant, and the playing of ORLANDO GIBBONS, the organist, a wicked accessory to divine service. He dismissed all these criticisms as contemptible, worthy only of those extremists who were described as Puritans.

He was equally at a loss to understand the attitude of some members of the House of Commons, including his Uncle Francis, towards the King and his ministers. So disrespectful were they to the divine authority of the King, that they criticized his policy, grudged him money, and declared that they had a traditional right to share his power.

Sir Ralph, meanwhile, served the King faithfully, but sometimes with misgiving. He was a member of Parliament himself, and shared to some extent the hostility towards the King's ministers. During the Spanish expeditions he had discovered the inefficiency of the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, the King's favourite, and disliked him most heartily. On the other hand, he understood better than those country members who (like his cousin Francis) were at Westminster only when Parliament was sitting, how expensive was the business of government. He himself, with other courtiers, had recently been obliged to lend the King £1000. He did not expect to see it again unless Parliament proved quite remarkably generous. Life at Court was very expensive, and his own salary as deputy knight-marshal¹ was but irregularly

¹ SIR EDMUND VERNEY, M.P., of Claydon, Bucks, was Knight-Marshal at this time. He was allowed a deputy and six officers to assist him in his duty, which was "continually to ride by day and night about the Court."

paid. The arduous duty of keeping order within the King's household and for twelve miles round, of dealing with the beggars, tradesmen, and "idle Scotch bodies" who thronged the palace gates, was a privilege rather than a profession. As a result Sir Ralph was sympathetic towards the King's financial necessities, and he himself was on occasion compelled to look about him for ways of raising money. He had applied to the King for a licence to run twelve hackney carriages in the cities of London and Westminster, hoping it might prove a profitable investment. Only fifty courtiers enjoyed a similar monopoly, but even so, Mary Corbet said it was ridiculous to suppose that six hundred carriages could make a reasonable profit all at once, even in so large a city.

CHARLES I did not get on well with his Parliaments. It was clear that the members intended, by keeping the King short of money, to induce him to listen to their grievances, and to rule the country with their advice and help. CHARLES I thought that a King should have a free hand in the matter of government, and when his Parliaments proved obstinate he dissolved them, and sent his own men to collect money from his subjects in the King's name. Then Sir Ralph was ordered to go down into his own shire and collect what was known as a Forced Loan. He went, obedient though reluctant. He guessed that there would be trouble, and that his cousin Francis would be the most troublesome. For Francis, he knew, did not believe in paying money to the King without consent of Parliament, and could produce historical arguments to prove the justice of his refusal. He had not read his father's and grandfather's notes (taken in sessions of Elizabethan Parliaments) for nothing, nor the records of the proceedings and privileges of Parliaments in the far-away reign of EDWARD III. Besides which Francis was skilled in the law, and in the cunning arguments of lawyers.

Sir Ralph was very much depressed as he rode westwards, though as a rule he was delighted to get back to his own manor. He found the whole district, usually peaceful enough, seething with indignation. The centre of ill-feeling was naturally the town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse, where merchants had, by reason of the woollen trade, frequent communication with the city of London, where the King's Government was at this time not at all

popular. But hostility had extended to the country, even to the out-of-the-way village of Nether Wootton. The pressgang had been there, to force recruits into the King's service, who had afterwards been quartered with other troops in Wootton-on-the-Fosse. This free quartering was in itself unpopular, poorer families were on occasion ruined by a long visit of hungry soldiery, and drunkenness, violence, and destruction of property were by no means unknown. But when three of the Nether Wootton villagers were hanged by martial law in the market-place on a charge of stealing, the general indignation knew no bounds. The mothers of the victims walked in to the market town and wept beneath the gallows, and John Midwinter (who with Francis Corbet represented the town in Parliament) swore that this exercise of martial law should not go unchallenged. What were the Assizes for, he asked, that lads should be hanged without trial? And when there was no danger of invasion, why should men be forced from their homes? There was a dark suspicion that the King was raising this army to keep his own subjects in order. And it was whispered that soon he would put the whole country under martial law, and destroy liberty for ever.

The reason why Sir Ralph had come down from London was soon known. Francis did refuse to pay the Loan to the King, and he went to London to appear before the Privy Council and make his protest. He became a popular hero in his own county. Imprisonment was, Sir Ralph knew, a certain result of this obstinacy. In those days the state of prisons was so bad that Dame Mary Corbet feared he would die of bad food, lack of fresh air, or of gaol fever. There was little Ralph could do to help him, though he was almost as anxious as Mary herself.

As for Dame Mary, she sometimes wished they could all live quietly at Wootton. Then she need never be separated from her children, and those fierce political discussions, which threatened to destroy the friendship between her husband and her brother, would never arise.

CHAPTER V

LONDON AND THE KING

"You are unlearned men that seek to make up a religion out of your own heads. . . . You show yourselves most ungrateful to God, to the King, and to the Church of England . . . you have preaching in every church, men have liberty to join in prayers. . . . You in unthankful manner cast off all this yoke, making rents and divisions in the church."

(Speech of the Archbishop to Conventiclers [Puritans] in the Court of High Commission, 1632.)

SOON after Francis Corbet was released from prison in 1628, he was enthusiastically elected to Parliament by the people of Wootton-on-the-Fosse. In this session the Petition of Right was drawn up, in which all the grievances of the kingdom were expressly stated. Francis spoke eloquently on the subject of Forced Loans and imprisonment without due cause. He reminded the House that though he himself had been released, many yeomen and citizens who had refused to pay had been sent off to the Low Countries to fight, and might never return to voice their grievances. The billeting of soldiers on private houses was not forgotten, nor the maintenance of martial law in time of peace.

The King hesitated a week before signing the petition, and young Hugh Corbet, for his part, hoped he would never sign. But even the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM himself urged the King to yield. When at last the King signed the petition, the city of London forgot all its hostility towards the King; bonfires were lit, and men shouted and sang because the King had admitted that their grievances were just, and his actions contrary to the laws of the Realm.

It was just at this time that Simon Fletcher came to London. Like Francis, he was not popular with authority. After leaving Cambridge he had become a parson, and had spent some years in the North of England where he had made many friends. These friends held strange, independent views about the Church and its government, which Simon thoroughly approved. He hated Bishops, disapproved of the English Prayer Book, and preached

long and enthusiastic sermons about the wickedness of those in high places. Francis had not heard any of these sermons, but he knew Simon to be a conscientious man who would do his uttermost for his parishioners. When the old parson, who had once taught him Latin in the Rectory at Wootton Courcy, died at a great age, Francis told Ralph that Simon would be an excellent man to have. He was certainly popular in Wootton, and his family very proud to have him home again as rector, but his old father was alarmed and indignant at his son's ideas. He was distressed rather than surprised when Simon was summoned before the Court of High Commission. So it was that Simon came to be in London in the summer of 1628. He stayed with a merchant in the city, a friend of John Midwinter, who told him all about the recent excitement when the King signed the petition, and how much trade had been hampered by the King's impositions. He had every hope that now things would be better.

While Simon was still awaiting his trial, there was a fresh outburst of cheering in London. Inquiring the cause, Simon was much astonished to be joyfully told that the DUK OF BT KINGSTON had been murdered. No pity for the King whose best friend he had been could restrain the popular enthusiasm. The King, it was said, never forgave his people for their brutal behaviour, which was such that he did not dare give his friend's body public burial. It was a mock funeral procession that Simon watched pass, while the bands deliberately played the most cheerful tunes, and the hearse swung by at a trot, between lines of rejoicing people.

All hope of goodwill and understanding was now at an end between the King and his subjects. When Francis Corbet was summoned for a new session in January, 1629, every one knew that Parliament would soon be dissolved, and that the Petition of Right would never be kept.

The main idea in the minds of the members was to leave on record some declaration of their opinions, a remonstrance which the people and all future Parliaments might read.¹

Simon heard that the Remonstrance had only been passed by the determination of the most indignant members. Some of

¹ There is a full account of this Parliament in Vol. VI of *The History of England*, 1603-42, by S. R. Gardiner.

these had actually held down the Speaker of the House of Commons in his chair to prevent him from ending the debate ; others took a hurried vote from the excited members, while outside the King's officer battered on the door. He had been ordered to stop the proceedings, but the Remonstrance was duly passed, and was discussed ceaselessly in the city of London. Every one knew that the Remonstrance was only the opinion of Parliament, and no law, for a law must receive the assent of King and Parliament, but the merchants determined to regard it as law nevertheless, particularly the part which declared :—

“ If any merchant or other person whatsoever shall voluntarily yield or pay the said subsidies of tonnage and poundage, not being granted by Parliament, he shall be reputed a betrayer of the liberty of England, and an enemy to the same.”

For six months the trade of the capital stood still, for the King's officers held up the merchandise till the duties the King demanded should be paid, and no one would pay. Even the Dutch merchants in the city (remembering perhaps their own fierce struggle for freedom) refused to trade, out of loyalty to their brother merchants.

Simon's own troubles had seemed to him overwhelming on his way to London ; now he saw them as an insignificant part of the mighty struggle between the King and his people. RICHARD CHAMBERS was the hero of the citizens. He had been imprisoned for refusing to pay the money demanded by the King's officers, and in the Court of Star Chamber had been fined the huge sum of £2000. His courage was so much admired by the Londoners that they were prepared to subscribe the money for the fine, but CHAMBERS was not to be let off so lightly. He was ordered to apologize, and given a paper to sign on which a humble apology was carefully written out. CHAMBERS took it, and the quill pen to make his signature. Instead of signing it, however, he wrote angrily, “ I do utterly abhor all the above contents and submission.” There could be no question of release after this, and CHAMBERS stayed in prison for many years.

While Simon was awaiting his trial he had opportunities of observing the sternness and the thoroughness of the ARCHBISHOP. If the King was demanding submission and obedience from his people, the Church Court of High Commission was no less sternly

putting down disorder and disunity. Simon was filled with pity for the poor and ignorant people known as conventiclers who were so determined to worship God in their own way that they were prepared to defy the ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY himself and all the Bishops. He saw them in charge of soldiers being taken from the overcrowded prisons to their trial. Many were women, some of them ill, most of them frightened and miserable.

It could not be denied, however, that the heads of the Church were doing a great deal towards the restoration of decency and order in the Church. On a former visit to London, Simon had been amazed at the lack of reverence which prevailed in the great Cathedral Church of St Paul's. "Paul's Walk" lay right through the church, and was used as a thoroughfare, and as a market-place. Even Simon, who did not attach supreme importance to the special sacredness of a church, was reminded of the story of the money changers in the New Testament. One man was summoned before the Court of High Commission for irreverent and unseemly behaviour in the cathedral, and pleaded that he had not noticed that he was in a church at all. The Court imprisoned him, and would not listen to his defence, but any simple countryman might have mistaken the transepts for an arcade.

Simon was tried at last. He was thankful that he had been granted bail, and spared the horrors of a term of imprisonment, with the chance of illness, and the bad food, chains, dirt, and discomfort that was the common lot of prisoners. The case before him dealt with a minister charged with strange crimes. He was said not only to swear and drink in the company of beggars, tinkers, and bedlam rogues, but to be skilled in magic. In particular, he cast strange spells on pigs. Simon could not help feeling the Court might have been fully occupied by dealing with such villains, without interfering with such as he was, who at least tried to do his duty towards his parish.

Simon's heresies were sternly dealt with. His preaching and practices in his church at Wootton Courcy were declared contrary to the doctrines of the Church of England, and he was forbidden to return, and fined no less a sum than £500. Such a sum would be the equivalent of many thousands in modern money, and Simon could not possibly have paid it. His merchant friends were distressed and indignant. They looked upon it as yet an-

other proof of the tyranny of the King, but they could not offer to pay his fine. They were already impoverished by the long dislocation of trade, consequent on their refusal to pay taxes to the King's officers.

Simon was imprisoned, and wished that he had been advised earlier in his career to go to the American Colonies, where he could have been free. He had thought it a cowardly thing then to run away, and not teach in his own country what he believed, but of what use could he be now in prison for life?

Francis Corbet came to his rescue. Not only did he pay his fine, but urged him to come back to Wootton Abbas with him as a tutor to his son Richard. When Francis told his sister Mary what he meant to do, she said that his heir would grow into a strange little Puritan under Simon's care, but Francis only laughed. He knew Simon for a good scholar and an honest man, and wished nothing better for his son.

Simon accepted the offer gratefully, and settled down happily at Wootton. Richard Corbet was at first somewhat young to learn Latin, but soon made good progress, and grew up to be a credit to Simon's teaching.

CHAPTER VI

A COUNTRY PARSON

"The Countrey parson desires to be all to his parish, and not only a pastor but a lawyer, also, and a physician"

"He takes care that there be not a beggar or idle person in his parish this he effects by bounty or perswasion, or authority, making use of that excellent statute which binds all parishes to maintain their own"

"Having often instructed his people how to carry themselves in divine service exacts reverence, by no means enduring either talking, or sleeping, or gazing, or leaning or half kneeling Answers also to be done not in a huddling or slubbering fashion, gaping or scratching the head, or spitting even in the midst of their answer"

"The parson exceeds not an hour in preaching, because all ages have thought that a competency."

(GEORGE HERBERT, *The Countrey Parson*, 1632)

WHEN Simon Fletcher was suspended by the Court of High Commission from his living in Wootton Courcy, Hugh Corbet suggested to his father that Everard Grantley should be presented to the vacant living. Grantley had been at St John's College, Oxford, when WILLIAM LAUD (made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1627) was President of that college. LAUD thought highly of him, which was in itself a recommendation, particularly after the sad end to Simon's ministry.

Hugh had first fallen in with Grantley on the road between London and Little Gidding, whither the King had sent Hugh to discover the state of the road, and to inquire of NICHOLAS FERRAR whether the books he was preparing for His Majesty were yet ready. NICHOLAS FERRAR was the head of the only community in England at that time, where English church people ordered their daily lives by a "Rule," as the monks and nuns had once done. QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA would not believe that in heretic England such a community could really exist. She said the King was only joking; so KING CHARLES at last determined to let the Queen see for herself, and ordered Hugh to go and find out whether the roads for this distant and adventurous journey were

fit for the Queen's coach. Grantley was travelling to Little Gidding out of a curiosity similar to the Queen's, and the priest and the courtier were each glad to find a travelling companion on the lonely, dangerous roads. The way led across low-lying, unhedged country. They had to swim their horses through flooded streams, wade in mud up to their horses' knees, and more than once they lost the high road altogether. They determined to push on notwithstanding, but agreed that the Queen's coach could not possibly make the journey. Hugh feared she would be greatly disappointed, but to make so long a road passable and safe was beyond hope.

Arrived at last at Little Gidding, they were welcomed by NICHOLAS FERRAR himself. He excused himself at once, however, saying that it was time for evening service in the church. No visitor, not the King himself, would have altered the rule and discipline of the house by so much as five minutes. The newcomers went with him, and as they stepped down into the once ruinous village church, Grantley was delighted with its beauty and order. The floor had been newly boarded, at the expense of FERRAR's mother, though many churches then had only earthen floors strewn with rushes. The woodwork and the windows were obviously most carefully looked after. As it was a Saint's Day, embroidered silks draped the altar. The small community were already assembled—two brothers of NICHOLAS FERRAR, with all their children, a sister and her children, with servants and visitors besides.

The service over, the guests were hospitably entertained, for NICHOLAS FERRAR did not extend his own stern asceticism to his guests. Long before daybreak on the day following, Hugh heard the household astir, followed by the sound of singing in the church. Later in the day, Grantley was allowed to see the room where the book-binding was being done by the women of the household, and was allowed to examine the parallel New Testament in preparation for KING CHARLES. Elsewhere, FERRAR's mother was ladling out broth and dumplings to village children, their reward for reciting a psalm correctly. In yet another room several people of the village were waiting for medical help and advice. A labourer was having a badly cut hand dressed, and preparations of home-grown herbs were being used. FERRAR had

studied medicine at the long-famous University of Padua. He allowed no one but himself to give medical advice, but his nieces were allowed to administer first aid.

Hugh and Grantley were soon on their homeward road again, not liking to trespass longer on the hospitality of the FERRARS. Grantley was very loth to go, hearing that GEORGE HERBERT, whom he knew, was expected. When, later in the same year, it was decided that Grantley should go to Wootton Courcy, he travelled to Wootton by way of Salisbury, to see HERBERT in his Rectory at Bemerton.

Grantley came to Wootton full of enthusiasm. He hoped to make his church and its services as beautiful as those in Gidding and Bemerton. He was overjoyed by his first sight of St. Nicholas' Church. The Flemish glass in the windows and the wall paintings made the interior of the church glow with colour. On his first visit the setting sun lit up the West window, which showed St. Christopher with the Christ-Child on his shoulders, wading through the stream. The blue of the sky and the crimson of the Saint's robe were patterned on the floor in the sunlight.

Grantley's pleasure in his church was changed to anxiety that night when he had supper at the Manor. Mary Corbet told him that a group of Puritans in the village were intent on the removal of the glass windows. It was only wonderful they had escaped so long. Sam Allbones and his family voiced the agitation against them, nor could he be reasoned out of his conviction that pictures of God and the saints were vain and idolatrous. He was full of hostility towards Grantley, whom he thought responsible for the departure of Simon.

Next day Grantley visited Nether Wootton, the two parishes having but one parson. The church there was badly in need of repair and smelt very dank. He wondered if he could ever find money and enthusiasm enough to restore it. The churchwardens were not pleased to see him, they too had been fond of Simon. They showed him the church plate, and Grantley noticed that in contrast to the finely wrought silver of Wootton Courcy, it was all of pewter. He suggested it should be plunged in boiling bran, and well rubbed while hot, before the next Sunday. It might at least be clean, he thought.

Before going in to his parsonage, he decided to look at his own church, and pushed open the door to enjoy its sunset beauty as before. He saw an angry sunset through the jagged edges of a broken window, and the shattered fragments of the picture of St. Christopher on the stone floor. Sam Allbones had done his work thoroughly. There could be no further discussion about the stained glass windows of Wootton Courcy.

There could be, however, further discussion as to the just punishment of the little group of Puritans in the village. Simon Fletcher, who had seen the misery of many such people in London, imprisoned or fined for similar offences by the powerful Court of High Commission, urged them to go at once to the New England



Lord, Thou hast given me a cell
Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
Is weatherproof, . . .
Low is my porch, as is my fate,
Both void of state;

And yet the threshold of my door
Is worn by the poor,
Who thither come and freely get
Good words or meat.
Like as my parlour, so my hall
And kitchen's small. . . .

A Parson's Thanksgiving to God for his house (ROBERT HERRICK, 1591-1674)

THE PARSONAGE AT WOOTTON COURCY

Colonies. There they could be free to worship as they thought right. The Allbones took his advice, made their way to Bristol, and there joined a group of emigrants. Sam only survived the rigours of the voyage and the hard colonial life a few months. His family, however, flourished, though several of them were so excessively independent in their views that the New Englanders themselves tried to suppress them. These made their way therefore to Rhode Island, where their descendants lived and grew wealthy.

Grantley's work in the village was doubtless eased by this departure, but he would have preferred them to stay and be converted to his way of thinking. He redoubled his efforts with

the rest of his flock, striving to be a "country parson" after the pattern of GEORGE HERBERT, and so to save the people of the parish from further "heresy and schism." In Wootton-on-the-Fosse, however, the number of religious sects multiplied apace, each sure that they and they alone had found the truth. They were equally prepared to die for their own beliefs and to destroy other people who disagreed with them. Grantley grew yearly more anxious about the state of the country. The King called no fresh Parliament and was trying to rule with the help of the stern ARCHBISHOP LAUD, the powerful Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber, and his own officials. The great QUEEN ELIZABETH herself, much though she loved power, would never have attempted to be so contemptuous of her people and her Parliaments. Every year the King's officers found it harder to force taxes from an angry people. It was clear that at last a Parliament would be summoned, and Grantley wondered how the Church would fare then.

In 1639, CHARLES was forced to ask a new Parliament for money, but he quarrelled with the members almost at once, and sent them home. In 1640 yet another had to be summoned,¹ and Sir Francis Corbet rode up to London with John Midwinter of Wootton-on-the-Fosse, vowing he would not return till the power of the King and the bishops had been checked. He met his Cambridge friend, OLIVER CROMWELL, in this Parliament, and found his views were as decided as his own.

Grantley soon heard with amazed indignation that ARCHBISHOP LAUD was actually in the Tower of London, and his very life in danger. He was ordered by Parliament to destroy all images of the saints, in his two churches, and to efface all the frescoes, which had been his sole consolation for the destruction of his windows. He hurried to the manor for help and advice in this predicament. Sir Ralph happened to be in Wootton, and was as anxious as his parson that the images should not be destroyed. He bethought him of that secret room where, in his father's boyhood, Catholic priests had been hidden. They could not save the wall-paintings, and these were covered with whitewash the very next day, but a carved and painted statue of St. Nicholas and another of the Virgin, which had hitherto escaped destruction, were taken by

¹ This became known as the Long Parliament.

night and hidden in the priest's room. Grantley hoped that in a few years they would be restored to their places of honour in the church.

When next Sir Ralph came to Wootton from London, it was with a commission to raise the militia of the county, in the name of the King, to defend the Crown and the English Church against the rebel Parliament. His cousin Francis did not ride with him, neither did Francis visit Wootton Manor. For he had also ridden down to raise the shire militia, but *his* commission was from Parliament. The people of Wootton found all this very confusing indeed. Politics they did not understand, and it was difficult to grasp the terrible fact that Sir Ralph Corbet of the Manor, and his popular cousin Francis (whom they had known all his life), were really going to fight each other. Who should say which of them knew best? Grantley, however, had no doubts on this subject. He had long considered Sidney Sussex, Cambridge (where Francis and Simon Fletcher had been educated) "a veritable nursery of Puritans," and a danger to Church and King. He urged his flock to hasten to obey the King and follow Sir Ralph. He told them of the insults offered to ARCHBISHOP LAUD, whose life was threatened as well as the very existence of the English Church. The rebels must be speedily destroyed.

CHAPTER VII

CIVIL WAR

"Two great things in question, firstly, the Prince's power, secondly, the freedom of Englishmen" (Mr Secretary Cecil in the House of Commons, 1601)

*"Loyalty is still the same
Whether it win or lose the game,
True as the dial to the sun
Although it be not shined upon"*

(SAMUEL BUTLER, *Hudibras*, 1663)

WHEN Sir Ralph Corbet rode home to Wootton in 1642, he was careful to avoid the company of his cousin Francis. There had been stormy scenes in the House of Commons, and the two men had definitely and finally taken sides. Sir Ralph was filled with righteous indignation that the Parliament men had forced the King to leave his capital, and were preparing to take up arms against him, and he wondered how he would explain to Mary, his wife, that her twin brother Francis was among the rebels. He hoped devoutly that he would never meet his cousin and brother-in-law in battle.

Dame Mary received the news in silence, and busied herself with necessary preparations for her husband's departure. She packed the gold and silver dinner-services that had been in the family since the time of Roger, the goldsmith, for her husband to take to the King. Sir Ralph was ready at last, and set off with the men of the village who were ready to follow him, with such arms as could be mustered. His son Hugh was already with the King. They expected to recruit as they marched northwards, in the King's name. His early training, his horsemanship, and experience of fighting in the low countries had made of Sir Ralph an excellent soldier. He and his friends thought they would have little trouble in showing the rebels that the King was their master. For men such as his cousin Francis were exceptions on the Parliament side. Many of them were townsmen and

tradesmen with no experience of war or the management of men. Sir Ralph was scornful rather than anxious when he heard that the people of Wootton-on-the-Fosse were determined to follow Francis; he wished him joy of an army of weavers and dyers. He tried to persuade Grantley to come with him as a chaplain, but the parson said that it was his duty to remain with his parishioners, and to guard his church from the attacks of the more violent of the Puritans who were longing for any chance of destruction.

Sir Francis meanwhile had ridden from the west country to his wife's manor in Huntingdon, to collect recruits for the Parliament army. He intended to join the company commanded by OLIVER CROMWELL, who was among the most enthusiastic supporters of the cause of Parliament. Francis found it easy to recruit men in the Eastern counties, for the people there had suffered from the interference of the Government, and were passionately determined to assert their independence. The tenants on his wife's manor were divided into half a dozen different groups with their own opinions on religion, for which they were all fully prepared to die. Many of them, before the war began, had been haled before the Court of High Commission in London to answer for their opinions. None of these new sects had any sympathy for the Archbishop, at this time in the Tower awaiting trial for his life. They felt his persecution of Puritan sects was but justly punished.

Francis thought that if enthusiasm for a cause could make soldiers of them, here was material for a formidable army. Tenant farmers left their land to fight, and reliable soldiers they made. Young men and boys in search of adventure gladly joined up too, and with these the new army had much trouble. They had never been part of an army before, and did not understand discipline. OLIVER CROMWELL knew that if they were to resist successfully the "men of honour" in the Royalist army, his "men of religion" too must learn to become part of a disciplined force. He was not afraid to take strong measures. One of the labourers from Francis' estate was put against a wall and shot because he had been riotous and had refused to obey his superior officer. The half-hearted who began to regret they had joined, and wished they were at home again, were sternly treated too. CROMWELL wanted men who would go anywhere and do anything, men who could be relied on to obey orders, men who were really enthusiastic

in the cause of religion and freedom. He worked tirelessly to provide such a force. Meanwhile, the King's army was undoubtedly superior. A plan had been made by which his forces should march on London. If London were retaken before the Parliament could put a well-trained army in the field the history of free Parliaments in England would be at an end. It was just a matter of time.

In London, the trained bands, which were the volunteer army of the city, were eager to do their best for Parliament. Not content with defending their own city they determined to send a force right across England to relieve the city of Gloucester, at that time surrounded by a strong Royalist army. It was an ambitious undertaking, and the Royalists laughed when they heard that the London hackney carriage-drivers had turned into gunners, and were taking cannon across England. The trained bands left London in good order, marching proudly beneath their banners. All the way they were harried by the Royalists, but they stuck grimly to their task of reaching Gloucester, fearing nothing save that they should arrive too late.

Hugh Corbet was among those Royalist Cavaliers who had been detailed to harass the trained bands. He was serving under PRINCE RUPERT, who commanded the cavalry of his uncle, KING CHARLES. The Prince had grown up in Germany during the long civil wars there, where he had fought since boyhood, and lived the life of a soldier of fortune. Burning villages, and foraging for food and shelter in a hostile country seemed natural enough, and he often forgot that many of the English villages were not at all hostile to KING CHARLES, and did not expect to be treated as his enemies.

The King had not enough soldiers to turn back the Londoners, nor was the besieging army large enough to invest Gloucester, and fight a pitched battle with the relieving force. It was thought prudent to retire from Gloucester, and the army of apprentices and hackney carriage-drivers were justly proud of the respect which they had inspired.

Gloucester is not very far from Wootton Courcy, and the soldiers passed close. Grantley thought that his church would be burnt at any moment, and Mary sent out a waggoner to bring in a party of wounded men reported to be in need of nursing.

Four of these proved to be rebels against the King, and her disloyal behaviour in nursing them in the Manor caused grave scandal in the neighbourhood. Her daughter Margaret, who was married to a squire in the next county, actually wrote a letter of protest, and all her husband's Royalist friends remembered that Francis Corbet, a rebel in the Parliament army, was Mary Corbet's brother.

Mary was in her heart more interested in the people engaged in the struggle than in the struggle itself. It seemed to her that there was much to be said on both sides, but she kept so disturbing an opinion to herself, feeling that it ought to be possible to know certainly which side was right and which wrong. She had little time for reflection, for in addition to the ordinary duties of a Lady of the Manor, and the care of her numerous family, she had to manage the estate for her absent husband. (Her mother-in-law, Dame Margaret, had been dead for many years, and her effigy in stone adorned the village church.) Never feeling herself to be such an excellent manager as Dame Margaret had been, Mary yet contrived to keep all in good order for Sir Ralph.

One morning she was at the gate of the Manor, as usual, distributing food to the beggars who congregated there daily, when she heard the sound of hoofs. Looking up hastily she saw her eldest son, Hugh. He dismounted, threw the reins to Tom Tucker (who had come hurrying up) and knelt to receive his mother's blessing, his wide-brimmed, plumed hat in his hand. After a year's active service she thought that he still looked more like a courtier than a soldier, in his gay doublet and cloak lined with crimson velvet. He assured her that he was a hardened warrior, that he had positively cut his way through Puritans in order to visit her, and that he always wore a steel casque when he went into battle.

He entertained her during the meal that she hastened to prepare for him by telling her of the King's doings in Oxford, where in the halls and grounds of the colleges some semblance of the old, gay life of the Court was still retained. He said that his father was well but grave, and seemed to take the war too seriously. He was sure that the King's armies would soon be in London again, and his power re-established. He was not

impressed so far by what he had seen of the Parliament armies. He said that in his own troop were only gentlemen prepared to give their lives in the King's service, whereas the "Roundheads" wanted to combine the art of fighting with their trade, or would be anxious to go home for the harvest. He was to learn at Newbury, a few weeks later, that the apprentices, returning to their trades from the relief of Gloucester, could stand fire in a pitched battle as well as any troop in the King's service, and remain as steady as veterans.

Parson Grantley came to visit Hugh, who advised him to bring the church plate to hide with the other precious things of the church in the secret room of the Manor. Any Puritan army that passed would not hesitate to plunder a church, hoping to find silver that could be melted down. When all the servants had gone to bed, the secret room behind the fire-place was opened, and the treasure was safely hidden till more settled times.

Hugh was proud of the pewter dinner-service that the King had given his father in return for the valuable gift of gold and silver plate that had been cut up, or melted down, to meet his need. *Hugh told his mother that he had actually received a section of the gold service which was being handed round Oxford in token for sovereigns, recognizable by the Corbet crow still visible on it.* The service was in good company, for most Royalists, and many Oxford colleges, would have scorned to eat from gold or silver when the King needed money.

Mary never saw Hugh again. The next year, 1644, he was wounded in a cavalry charge at the Battle of Marston Moor. Francis heard that there was one of his own name among the wounded prisoners, and went fearing to see Hugh or Ralph, hoping it might prove to be a stranger. He found Hugh already exhausted by loss of blood, and shot in several places. He could do little for him. He wished the boy did not remind him so vividly of Mary. He felt as if he had been personally responsible for the death of his nephew, and thought that now he would never be able to face Mary again. Hugh died next morning, and Francis saw to it that a special messenger was despatched to Wootton.

The war dragged on. The King's armies failed to capture

London. OLIVER CROMWELL was training soldiers at Windsor fit to meet the King's men, and fight a decisive battle. Francis joined him there, for he had already proved himself an efficient officer. The New Model Army certainly looked formidable, a professional army in scarlet uniform, enthusiastic, disciplined, led by men of real military genius. PRINCE RUPERT himself had been heard to ask before an engagement: "Is CROMWELL there?"

In 1645 the new army met the King's forces at Naseby, and the discipline and military skill that the Puritan soldiers had learnt from CROMWELL turned the scale against the Royalists. The King was forced to fly, and his papers proving how desperate the Royalist cause was thought to be, and asking for instant help from France, were left behind on the battle-field, and captured by the Parliament men.

Sir Ralph Corbet was badly wounded, and once again Francis had an opportunity of showing that his quarrel with his cousins was not personal. The Royalists were in confusion and flight, but Sir Ralph was conveyed back to Wootton in the rare luxury of a horse-litter. Mary nursed him carefully, and he grew slowly stronger. Before he was about again the Model Army passed through the village. The Manor was forced to give them hospitality. They stabled their horses in the church, and, to the anguish of Grantley, tied them to the carving at the back of the high altar, in order to show that they had no respect for "steeple houses" and the outward trappings and signs of religion. But they had



AN OFFICER IN THE NEW MODEL ARMY

long services every evening, sang psalms, and discussed religion round their fires at night. They kept, too, a strict watch on the people of the village to see that they took no pleasure and did no unnecessary work on the Lord's Day. Wootton had never spent such a serious and sober few days before, in the whole history of the village.

Before Sir Ralph was fully recovered, an order was received from Parliament that his manor house was forfeit, and that he must leave Wootton and England immediately. The King was a prisoner, and the country was in the power of Parliament. Grantley could no longer hold his services in the church, and the Archbishop had been executed. There was indeed nothing more that the Royalists could do for their cause, and Sir Ralph and Dame Mary made preparations to leave the country, with all their children and some of their servants. Sukey, the nurse, was most courageous. She declared she would never leave them, even if the family took the extreme and awful measure of going abroad. She said that she would be ready to act as maid to her mistress as well as nurse to the children. Dame Mary was greatly relieved at this devotion, for though she would have thought nothing of preparing a meal for twenty people, she would have thought it quite out of the question to be expected to dress unaided, and arrange her hair herself.

After they had gone, the Manor was again occupied by soldiery. It was fortunate for the Corbets that it never happened to be actually in the fighting area, so that it was not burnt down as happened to many houses at this time. All articles held to be of value were stolen, and much wanton damage was done. A sergeant in the Model Army thought gold might be concealed behind Hugh Corbet's picture, and slashed VANDYKE's painting to see, without thought for or interest in what he was destroying. In the same hope of finding hidden money much of the panelling was torn out, but no one found the secret room, and Sir Ralph had taken such gold as was left to him to France, and was living on it in Paris. The soldiers left at last, greatly disappointed.

The news that reached the exiles of the state of England gave them little hope of a speedy return. The rumour of the King's escape from his prison in the Isle of Wight was speedily followed by tidings of recapture, and the grim statement that he was to

be tried for his life. In January 1649, Francis Corbet was present at the King's execution outside his own Banqueting Hall, built for KING JAMES I by INIGO JONES, and Parliament was indeed supreme. Grantley had refused to leave England with Sir Ralph. When he could no longer remain at Wootton, his church and rectory being occupied by a Puritan minister approved by Parliament, he made his way to Little Gidding, anxious to discover how the FERRARS had fared during the war. He found the church and the house had both been destroyed by the Puritans; NICHOLAS FERRAR was dead, and the whole community scattered. It seemed to him that all religion and peace and order in England were dead. Sadly he made his way across the Channel, and joined the English community in Paris. Neither he nor Sir Ralph nor Dame Mary were ever to see England again.

As for Sir Francis, he would have been glad to return to his Manor, but his son Richard was managing it so admirably that he could not pretend to himself that he was indispensable there. CROMWELL still needed his army, for the Scots and the Irish were by no means prepared to settle down quietly under the newly-established Commonwealth, and there was always the fear of a fresh Royalist rebellion. It was a strange ending for one who had started his career as a champion of freedom, to become a soldier whose business it was to police three countries. Sir Francis fought under the new Commonwealth flag in Scotland, Ireland, and England after the King was dead. Sometimes he thought that there seemed to be little more freedom than of old. He saw priests and Royalists being driven out of the country, heavy taxes being levied, and the stern suppression of those festivities that he had himself enjoyed as a boy, and could not even now be persuaded to regard as wholly bad.

CHAPTER VIII

FIGHTING SAILOR AND PEACEABLE CHRISTIAN

"(In the year 1661) Early one morning I met four press masters
they took hold of me two under my arms, and two under my hams, and
lifted me upon their shoulders they heaved me over the wharf, cross
the boat thearts which was about five yards high "

(THOMAS LUTTING, *The Fighting Sailor turned Peaceable Christian*, 1711)

In 1649, Dan Slater, weaver's apprentice in Wootton-on-the-Fosse, was sent to London with a consignment of woollen goods. This unwonted adventure made up a little for his disappointment in having been apprenticed to the sedentary business of weaving. He was very tall and strong for his age and looked fully sixteen, though really two years younger.

He was wandering about the city of London, when he was seen by a body of soldiers in the scarlet and grey uniform of CROMWELL'S New Model Army. They were out to press likely lads for the service of the Commonwealth, and had already several prisoners. "Here's a lusty rogue," said one, and laid a heavy hand on Dan's shoulder. He made little resistance, for if he were a soldier he could not be an apprentice, and thought the other captives who lamented their fate an unadventurous lot. So he trudged along quite cheerfully between the soldiers and was just imagining himself in a cavalry charge, scattering the enemy's pikemen, unscathed amidst musket bullets and cannon balls, when he suddenly realized he was in a dockyard. The next minute he was marched aboard ship and his heart sank. It seemed they were making a sailor of him. This he had not expected. On his way from Wootton he had overtaken a sailor—a deserter—trudging homewards. A diet of mouldy bread and sour beer, together with no pay, and the cat for grumbling about it, had cured the man of any wish to fight again for Parliament. He looked gaunt and ill, and remembering the grim picture of disease and death, drawn for him of life at sea, Dan gave himself up for lost.

Hearing some joke between the soldiers and the sailors about the prisoners, that here were some desperate fellows to frighten PRINCE RUPERT, a faint hope rose in him that he might be intended after all for a soldier. But he soon learnt what every Londoner then knew, that since KING CHARLES' execution, PRINCE RUPERT and many cavaliers had taken to the sea, and were actually blockading the city of London. The Parliament were anxious, and everywhere men and merchant ships were being pressed into the service of the Commonwealth; BLAKE had been made Admiral of the Fleet, and the war between Royalist and Parliamentarian was to be fought out at sea.

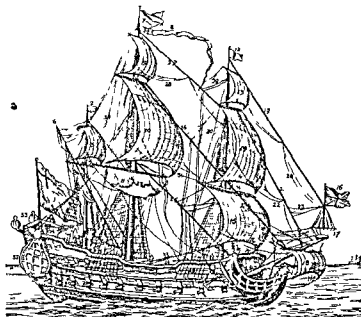
Dan had no time to lament his fate. He was handed over to a bearded, barefooted giant who "taught him the ropes." His good worsted stockings his mother made him were stripped off, his excellent leather shoes discarded; his neat homespun breeches were cut at the knee so that they hung loose like shorts. His feet henceforward were always wet and he was nearly always cold, but he slept well at night under sailcloth in spite of it, tired out by his day's work. A few things in his old life stood him in good stead. He took easily to the mending of sailcloth and the tying of knots, and this skill made up a little for his stupidity in learning the names of masts and rigging.¹

He was not starved, but on the contrary received good food, coarse bread, and butter with it, and cheese and treacle too. Porridge was served out with dark West Indian sugar on top; sometimes he had boiled bacon with rice; sometimes prunes (rare luxury at sea), and all was washed down with a regular ration of brandy. Dan was surprised and grateful, and old sailors told him that it was all BLAKE'S doing. The sailors of ELIZABETH and CHARLES I had certainly never fared so well.

PRINCE RUPERT'S blockade of the Thames did not last long, and Dan started on his first voyage. The Commonwealth fleet, commanded by BLAKE, pursued RUPERT to Kinsale, then to Portugal, and at last drove him from the seas. When he came ashore he found himself in receipt of pay, which every one had hoped for, but not all had really expected to get.

By this time Dan was reconciled to a sea-faring life. He spent

¹ This drawing of a contemporary sailing-ship shows some of the names he was supposed to know.



- 1 Embow
- 2 Main Vane
- 3 Mizzenmast
- 4 Mizzenmast yard
- 5 Cross jack yard
- 6 Mizzen yard
- 7 Main Vane
- 8 Main Pendant
- 9 Main Toppailanftale
- 10 Main T. p. f. l. e
- 11 Main f. l. e
- 12 Fore Vane

- 13 Fore Toppailanftale
- 14 Fore T. p. f. l. e
- 15 Fore f. l. e
- 16 Jack
- 17 Sprit f. l. e
- 18 Sprit f. l. e
- 19 Foretopgallant f. l. e
- 20 Foretopgallant baulnes
- 21 Foretopmast f. l. e
- 22 Foretopmast baulnes
- 23 Crane line
- 24 Fore f. l. e

- 25 Main f. l. e
- 26 Main topgallant f. l. e
- 27 Main topgallant f. l. e
- 28 Main topgallant baulnes
- 29 Foretopgallant baulnes
- 30 Foretopgallant baulnes
- 31 Main f. l. e baulnes
- 32 Galleon
- 33 Bow Launches
- 34 Main topgallant baulnes

A SAILING SHIP

(From Seller's *English Pilot*, London, 1701 fol)

his pay as riotously as pay could be spent in Puritan England, and returned quite cheerfully to the prospect of another voyage

Sea-fighting was not over because PRINCE RUPERT was disposed of. The English regarded with high disfavour the amazing increase of Dutch trade. Dutch ships were everywhere, in the

East Indies and the Americas ; their ships even came into English waters and interfered with the fisheries. OLIVER CROMWELL framed an Act called the Navigation Act, which tried to prevent this, and keep English trade in English hands. The English also claimed that all ships in the narrow seas should dip their flags to the English. The Dutch were a proud and obstinate people, steeled by their struggles against the Spaniards to a fierce independence ; their captains would not tamely acknowledge the English ensign, and Dan lived an exciting life patrolling the Channel to enforce the regulation. In the war that followed it was the best sailors in Europe who poured broadside after broadside into each other's ships, and fought to the water's edge as their ships sank under them.

Soon grass grew in the empty streets of once prosperous Dutch seaports, and Dan was immensely proud of his country, his admiral, his ship, and himself. How should he know that the price of ruining Dutch trade was so high that even the fines of exiled Royalists did not suffice to pay it ? People in England were complaining of high taxation as in the days of KING CHARLES, and even so a million and a quarter of debt was accumulating for the Navy, which would one day have to be paid.

The old quarrel with Spain was also renewed, and their whole treasure fleet captured. When it was reported that English merchant ships were being harassed in the Mediterranean by pirates, Dan's ship was ordered there, and the pirates, Turkish subjects of the Bey of Algiers, learnt to be penitent and polite.

As to the men with whom Dan served, they came from every part of Britain, all compelled by the pressgang to serve the Commonwealth, but not all unwilling so to serve. There were men from Bridgwater who boasted they had known BLAKE well at home ; men from Devon who spoke the English of DRAKE and of HAWKINS. There were Scotch Presbyterians and English Baptists, and men with strange beliefs from the Midlands. When times were slack, these would debate endlessly on the great question of the day, the true religion.

On one ship was a group who called themselves Quakers. They were a silent people, with so good a reputation for seamanship that the captain, himself a Baptist, was heard to say that he would not care if all his crew were Quakers. TOM LURTING, a

friend of Dan's, joined this group, and shortly after his conversion the ship was ordered into action. Early in the engagement Dan saw TOM recklessly exposing himself to the enemy's fire, but later saw him turn away from the gun he served and walk dazedly to the centre of the ship. He found time to ask if he were hurt, but TOM seemed only able to say, as if to himself, "How if I have killed a man." Dan thought sadly his friend must have had a bullet in his brain and went back to his duty. He had known TOM to be the bravest and most reckless of fighters. It seemed a strange thing that a bullet could make a foolish coward of a man.

Next day TOM and his friends were seen alive and well, but they calmly announced that they were going to the captain to ask to be released, because their conscience forbade them to fight again. Dan thought them fortunate on the whole to escape from that interview with nothing worse than sore backs. TOM told him that the captain had threatened them with a sword in their guts if they would not fight next time. The religious on board searched their Bibles to prove that war and Christianity went excellently together. They discussed fiercely, but a horror of killing had come upon TOM, and no argument could alter him. Dan became daily more convinced that he would be killed himself rather than kill any man again. Yet the printed orders of the ship were clear. "If any man flinch from his quarters in time of engagement, a man may kill him."

Some weeks later a ship was sighted off Leghorn, supposedly a Spanish man-of-war, and decks were cleared for action. All men, save the Quakers, went to their quarters, but these assembled on the half-deck in full view. They could not be described as "flinching" from quarters, yet only replied to the lieutenant's peremptory orders. "We can fight no more." One had his hat torn off, and was dragged down. The captain arrived, sword in hand, in a towering rage. He stood glowering, to show mutineers that he could not be intimidated, and cowards that they must fight or die. But the little group of men on the deck did not look like mutineers, they were so quiet and still. nor did they crave mercy like cowards, and TOM came forward to meet the captain. To the silent ship's company he seemed to be walking to his death, the captain—as every one knew—would not scruple to kill a mutineer. The two men looked at each other, the captain

lowered his sword. He could not butcher an unarmed madman who stood calmly waiting for death, as a man might wait for orders. Turning on his heel he went to his cabin. The crew stood paralysed, adjusting their unaccustomed minds to this strange variety of cowardice that preferred to accept death rather than to inflict it; and on the still stranger conduct of their captain, who appeared to have accepted the amazing situation.

The tension was broken by the look-out man, who at that moment declared the Spanish man-of-war, so-called, was only a neutral Genoese boat, so all danger was over for the Quakers for one day. Soon after, Dan's ship was ordered home and the crew paid off. TOM LURTING signed on in a merchant-man, and Dan hoped fervently he would not be impressed again into fighting service. He did not see him again till OLIVER CROMWELL was dead, and KING CHARLES II had been restored to the throne.

Dan himself was lucky enough to put to sea again in the Admiral's flagship, newly-built by order of the Lord Protector.¹ This was very different from a mere merchant-man commandeered for war. She was a real man-of-war built to carry eighty brass guns, and had a crew of eight hundred men. The figure-head was an effigy of OLIVER CROMWELL, and the name of the ship the *Naseby*. At the mast head flew the pennant, some twenty yards long, with the red cross of St. George on it, much elongated. Men called it the whip that would drive the Dutchmen from the seas. At the yard-arm flew the Admiral's flag, with the red cross of St. George and the harp of Ireland in the centre, but the Union Jack was nowhere to be seen.

Dan was still serving on board the *Naseby* in 1660 when ADMIRAL BLAKE and OLIVER CROMWELL, the Lord Protector, had been dead for two years. England was no longer at war with foreign countries, but in considerable anxiety about home affairs. CROMWELL's son RICHARD had resigned from the office of Protector, and most people thought that PRINCE CHARLES would become King of England.

In April 1660, LORD MONTAGU, with his secretary, Mr. SAMUEL PEPYS, came on board the *Naseby*, and the ship sailed for Holland, where KING CHARLES was then living.

In May, the seamen were called on deck and a proclamation

¹ OLIVER CROMWELL became Lord Protector in 1654.

read to them from KING CHARLES II at his Court in Breda, to his loving subjects, and Dan shouted cheerfully with the rest "God save KING CHARLES" A few days later he saw the King himself and his brother, the Duke of York, who came on board to be taken over to England Dan and his friends wondered how KING CHARLES liked the figure-head of the *Naseby*, but were surprised to hear that the name of the ship was to be changed to *Royal Charles*, for they held to change the name of a ship was a most unlucky thing to do

CHARLES II was most friendly to every one He insisted on being served with sailors' commons, pease and pork, instead of more delicate fare Dan heard that one of the King's gentlemen was called Corbet, and wondered whether the gay and fashionable young man who nearly always spoke French could possibly be one of the Corbets from Wootton

When Dan next went ashore to spend his share of the gold ducats which the King had distributed among the crew, he found England indulging in a wild orgy of gaiety, and enthusiasm for the Restoration of CHARLES STUART It seemed as if every problem of government had been happily solved, and that seamen in particular had nothing to lose by sailing again under the Union Jack KING CHARLES and his brother were often in the dockyards at Chatham and at Greenwich, discussing naval matters, and few people knew that MR PEPYS, now Clerk of the Acts, was despairing over the accounts in the Navy office near the Tower, and wondering how the accumulation of debts and the money due to the crew were ever to be paid

CHAPTER IX

THE RETURN OF THE ROYALIST

"Yeomen . . . do come to such wealth, that they are able, and daily do buy the lands of unthrifty gentlemen."

(SIR THOMAS SMITH, *The Commonwealth of England*, 1589.)

BOTH Sir Ralph Corbet and his wife Mary died in their exile in Paris during the Protectorate, leaving the care of their four younger children, and the claim to the Manor of Wootton Courcy, as their only legacy to their son Edmund. Just before Sir Ralph's death he had arranged a marriage for Edmund with the daughter of another Royalist exile. Her dowry was not such as Sir Ralph would have demanded for his heir in more fortunate days, though it was larger than anything he had settled on his elder daughter. As things were, young Edmund Corbet, inclined to gaiety and extravagance as he was, could hardly have paid for his velvet cloaks and silk stockings without it. His perpetual anxieties about his finances and his responsibilities towards his sisters and brothers made him, during his time in Paris, unwontedly serious and preoccupied. In 1660 all his troubles seemed over, for in that year PRINCE CHARLES returned to England as King CHARLES II. Edmund was more fortunate than many Royalists, for his manor was restored to him, and he felt at last light-hearted, wealthy, and secure. Arriving in London, he took a house near Drury Lane for his family, whom he left in charge of his brothers, Henry and Roger. He himself hurried westwards to make Wootton Manor ready to receive his wife.

There was no doubt about the feelings of the people of Wootton towards the Corbets. Some of the villagers might have fought in the Parliamentary Army; or they might have approved when the Church service was simplified and the Prayer Book abolished; but their loyalty to the family at the Manor was deep and instinctive. They had been grieved and indignant when Sir Ralph went away; they were unanimous in their delight when his son

returned Old Tom Tucker, in a fair way by this time to become the oldest inhabitant, welcomed him with tears of joy It was to Tom that Edmund had sent an advance message announcing his return, and it was Tom's army of grandsons and grand-daughters that had attempted to make the house habitable for him

Edmund, who remembered the place when his mother, Dame Mary Corbet, had ordered it, felt almost glad that she could not see it in the confusion and neglect into which it had fallen Her herb garden was overgrown and tangled, the yew hedges were out of shape, the carp dead, and their ponds covered with slime The meal that was spread for him in the great hall was served on wooden platters, and his cider in an earthenware mug, and on the bare table The pewter dinner-service, given to his father by King Charles I in return for the valuable silver and gold plate His Majesty had melted down, seemed to have vanished Edmund feared that the Puritan soldiers had taken it away in their knapsacks There were ample evidences of their occupation and destruction elsewhere The tapestries were torn away—which might be accounted for by the story that the soldiers had been in need of horse cloths Perhaps this accounted, too, for the absence of linen sheets and tablecloths, and of some of the bed hangings The bed in which he slept the first night had black sheets and black hangings, all that could be found of those his mother and grandmother had woven and embroidered These funereal sheets must, Edmund supposed, be the ones that his grandmother had dyed (according to seventeenth-century custom) after the death of Sir Roger They were a gloomy setting for his first nights in the old house, with the task of assessing and repairing the damage to occupy his days

Richard Corbet rode over from Wootton Abbas the day following Edmund's return They met as strangers, though they were cousins, for even before Edmund had left England as a boy the families had become estranged Richard, however, brought with him the pewter dinner-service, explaining that it had been entrusted to his father by Edmund's mother The two cousins had a meal together, but did not feel at ease Edmund disliked Richard's slow, country ways, his rough, plain clothes, and uncurled hair He felt, too, that Richard did not approve of him, though Richard, regarding him stolidly, between mouthfuls of

roasted sirloin, felt in reality friendly enough. He did think Edmund's false fair wig an extreme affectation, and wondered at the two-pronged skewer he used to put his food into his mouth. Edmund had offered him one of these new-fangled forks, as he called it, but Richard refused. A knife was good enough for him. Edmund meanwhile reflected that if Richard were a fair sample of the country squires who would be his neighbours in the country, he would prefer to live in London and be amused. For Edmund belonged to a new generation of country gentlemen, to whom the atmosphere of Court and city seemed more natural and congenial than life on their own inherited estates. He had left Wootton too young to feel really at home there. . . .

Jan Tucker, Tom's eldest grandson, showed Edmund the manor farm (which he now rented) with pardonable pride. The family was prosperous, as they deserved, and Jan felt almost the pride of possession in the land he managed so skilfully. Edmund was little interested in farming, and found Jan's English hard to understand. As Jan talked, Edmund was gracious and approving, but he was reflecting how high the cost of living was in London, that the land seemed good and Jan prosperous. Was the rent the man paid quite high enough? he wondered. For Edmund would need his rents to pay for that good time which should compensate him for all the long years of poverty and exile.

The village was not, however, at once conscious of the changes that exile had made in their Lord of the Manor. The feasting at Edmund's expense, in the great hall, and the merry-making which celebrated the arrival of the family, made too joyful a contrast with the gloom of Puritanism under which they had so long lived. It was for the moment enough that feasting was no longer vicious, laughter not ungodly. In 1660, such Midsummer fires were lit on the hills behind Wootton Courcy as old Tom himself had never seen bettered. No one bothered that year to inquire whether they were indeed a relic of pagan worship, or a wicked indulgence in pleasure. Edmund's popularity blazed high, and in the election for CHARLES II's first Parliament he was elected for the shire.

Katherine, his wife, was delighted. Parliament meant London, and London meant gaiety, whereas a winter at Wootton spelt infinite boredom. The still-room and the dairy and the kitchens

and the bakehouse, which had filled the thoughts of earlier Corbet ladies, had no meaning for her, who had left her own country home at the age of five. Her French cook prepared her meals and baked her bread. In place of homespun linen and country cloth, she liked to wear Indian silks and cottons, which needed none of her time at the spinning-wheel. She did her best to make herself comfortable. She had one room in the rambling old manor furnished as a dining-room, disliking the old plan of a



A LADY OF FASHION IN 1660

household meal in the hall. She insisted, too, on having a "day-bed" in her own private room, with cane seat and back and soft, damask cushions. Here she would recline, sipping a new-fangled drink which she called "tay," which seemed to her preferable to ale or cider. For her tea she had imported delicate Chinese porcelain, never seen before in Wootton, for silver cups were too hot to hold, and English earthenware too clumsy.¹ Reclining, she had time to think how dull the country was, a conclusion

¹ In the seventeenth century English pottery was made chiefly in Wrotham, Staffordshire and Derby. The Chinese secret of porcelain was not known in England till the eighteenth century.

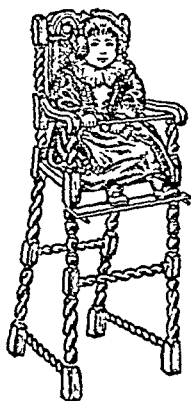
which would have startled Dame Margaret or Dame Mary. Not even the prospect of a four-days' journey in an unsprung coach over country roads could depress her, when her husband made ready to go to London.

Edmund had many difficulties to contend with besides his manor and his rents and his wife and his two baby sons. He had two sisters and two brothers to think of. Penelope, the elder sister, he decided to take to London as gentlewoman to his wife. Betty stayed behind in Wootton with old Sukey, the nurse, and the babies, Hugh and John. Edmund had, so far, arranged marriages for neither of them, for dowries were a great expense. It would not have been considered at all seemly in a Corbet and a gentlewoman to please herself in marriage, so Betty resigned herself to await her brother's pleasure.

Henry and Roger, like their sisters, offered further problems for their harassed elder brother to settle, but they could at least earn their own living. Henry wanted to go into the Army, and was made an ensign in GENERAL MONK's old regiment, which, though it had begun as a part of a rebel army, survived the King's restoration, the men insisting on their nickname of Coldstream. Later he saw active service in Ireland and in the Netherlands under WILLIAM III, and finally died of wounds after the Battle of Blenheim. He left a large family of sons, who all served either in the Army or the Navy, as did their sons after them.

Roger was tired of poverty and determined to go into business. By the kindly offices of Richard Corbet, who had business connections through his wife, Roger was apprenticed to a London merchant trading in the Levant. Edmund did not quite approve of trade for such a near relation, quite forgetting how the Corbets came to be lords of the manor of Wootton.¹ He consoled himself, however, by hoping that Roger would grow wealthy, as in fact he did.

Edmund, in London once again, forgot his troubles for a time



JOHN CORBET IN
1663

¹ See Volume II.

in a round of gaiety. His duties as Member of Parliament did not weigh heavily on him. His main concern was to support all the new laws against the Puritans. The English Prayer Book was read again in English churches, and all who would *not conform* were not allowed to take part in the government of their town or country, nor to hold their own services in their own way, nor to educate their children. They were treated as enemies to their King and country and were held capable of rebellion at any moment. They were supposed to plot treason at their meetings. Puritan ideas had meant for Edmund and his friends the Civil Wars, a boyhood of poverty, and the death of their King. Now that the King was restored they meant to have their revenge.

How these laws affected the lives of the people of Wootton-on-the-Fosse belongs to another chapter. Edmund was making up for years of seriousness by taking part in the gaieties of "Restoration London." All the theatres were open again, where the plays of DRYDEN were performed. Women appeared on the public stage for the first time, and in Drury Lane, NELL Gwyn was to be seen. The comedies in which she acted were assured of success, and the King and his courtiers came often to see her.

Katherine Corbet delighted in these entertainments no less than her husband. She congratulated herself that women were no longer debarred from theatres. She liked to arrive early in her coach or sedan chair, pass the queue of citizens waiting for the cheaper seats, and sit masked in her box to see the Court party arrive. All that she saw would be a subject of conversation the next day. For she liked to entertain her friends with gossip in her dressing-room as she sipped her chocolate, while her maids arranged her hair or perruque of white curls.

On one such occasion at the theatre she saw her brother-in-law, Henry, on a bench in the pit with his gay friends. The theatre was roofed in the reign of CHARLES II, and the "groundlings" (who had stood in the pit in SHAKESPEARE's day) now found the cheapest seats were in the highest tier of all. She did not see her younger brother-in-law, Roger, the apprentice, who had just scraped together enough money to pay for a seat in the tier above the boxes. He was wondering enviously how his brother Henry managed to dress so fashionably. He himself was wearing

his own hair, a long cloak, and a wide-brimmed hat of the old-fashioned sort. His brother wore the new "vest," a close-fitting garment resembling a cassock, which the King had recently made fashionable. It was worn under the coat, and buttoned down the front. Henry's was of black silk pinked at the edges with white, and Roger thought the sober colouring set him off well against the many bright colours that the other men wore. His silver-hilted sword looked very fine too, the apprentice thought. He was not himself supposed to wear one. The periwig that Henry wore, though it was his own hair made up, altered him so much that Roger had not recognized him for nearly five minutes. This he envied least of all, for that plague which in 1665 ravaged London was already (in 1664) becoming a menace, and wigs were said to carry the infection. People did not know how to disinfect, nor did they understand how important it was to be clean, and it was said that some wigs were made of the hair of plague victims.

Plays at the theatre in those days were over by five or six o'clock, leaving plenty of time for further entertainment. Katherine would drive in the enclosure in Hyde Park, or visit the mulberry gardens (where Buckingham Palace now stands). Edmund's favourite amusement was playing cards, at which he usually lost heavily. He was skilful at the game of "paille maille,"¹ played in the Mall in St. James' Park, which was kept carefully raked and sprinkled with fine earth for the ball to travel smoothly. He played tennis too (not "lawn tennis"), and on one occasion played with CHARLES himself. There were many people watching, and these applauded every stroke the King made, good, bad, and indifferent, which annoyed Edmund.

It was an expensive life, and Edmund was soon in debt. He hoped his luck would one day turn at cards, in which he was particularly unfortunate. He grew angry with Katherine for her extravagance, and was particularly annoyed one day when he arrived home to find a string of asses before his door, and one of them being milked by his wife's orders. She was on the point of paying three and sixpence for a quart of this milk, and she declared

¹ In the reign of CHARLES I this game was played in the street that bears its name. During the Commonwealth houses were built there and the Mall was therefore used instead.

that she must look after her complexion. He was still more annoyed on those occasions when, having prevailed on his brother Roger to tell her when the East Indiamen were due at the docks, she went there to buy silks and muslins at the ship's side. To his remonstrances she replied with truth that he often spent as much, or more, than £50 in a single month on his own suits, besides unknown sums squandered on periwigs and scented gloves. She was as much addicted to cards as her husband, so she could not conveniently criticize him for that.

The climax came one day when Katherine was expecting guests. Five o'clock arrived and the guests, but Edmund had not returned. In the kitchen the French cook wrung his hands over the new entree (the brains of a capon baked like a cheese-cake, which should never be kept waiting). He wished he had served oysters instead. Katherine gave her guests dinner, and it was not till the anchovy savoury was finished that news came of Edmund. Then it was from the debtors' prison in Southwark that a message came. For there Edmund had been taken protesting, indignant, and on foot. He had been forced to leave his coach, and that, it appeared, was impounded in Green Yard. He begged his wife to see that influential friends secured his release before night.

Certainly it was time, even Katherine saw it now, that they both returned to Wootton. She made immediate preparations, whilst the indignant Sir Edmund made use of his recovered freedom to complain in Parliament that a member's privilege of freedom from arrest had been ignored. He had the satisfaction of seeing the *Commons* whom his creditors had induced to conduct his arrest, kneel in the House and listen meekly to stern reproof. It was not for privilege in this sense that SIR JOHN ELIOT had died, but he went home to Wootton feeling that he too had upheld the *honour* of Parliament.

Edmund was now obliged to sell some of his land. The Tuckers had been saving steadily, hoping for an opportunity of this kind. Now they produced Edmund's price from the rafters of their cottage in Roger's Row. Jan Tucker thus became an independent farmer. On Sundays he sat on in his pew after the service the Doelittles, and the Dyers

and the Broadribs, "mere cottagers," had all left the church. Then he walked proudly out with the Elworthys and the Aye-drunkens, and all the other families of Wootton who had owned a share in the village lands "time out of mind." For this was the custom of the village.

Old Tom by this time could only sit in the sun outside the cottage in Roger's Row, and carve toys for his grandchildren. He was proud and happy that his family had prospered, but wished that Jane had lived to see her grandson owning his own land, for Jane had died many years earlier, worn out by the willing hard work of their early years. Tom lived to be a hundred and one years old, and when he died this epitaph was carved for him :

THOMAS TUCKER.

Born 1586.

Dyed March the 4. 1687.

" He lived one hundred and one
Sanguine and Strong.
An hundred to one
You do not live as long,"

which all the villagers felt was fine poetry as well as most suitable. Tom himself would have enjoyed the joke. He was buried in a woollen shroud according to the law for the encouragement of the woollen industry. His epitaph was carved on the stone slab above his head. Generations of Tuckers regarded it with pride.

At the Manor, economy was effected by making John Corbet his father's bailiff. He had grown up a serious country boy, well fitted for the task. After his father's death, he administered the estate faithfully for his brother Hugh. He married Hannah, daughter of William Fletcher of Nether Wootton, who had been well brought up by her mother to manage dairy and kitchens. Under her care the manor regained something of its air of simple prosperity. John farmed with care the demesne land that was left, and the strips assigned to him in the open fields. Hannah had but one anxiety. She wondered what would happen when Hugh, the heir, married, and chose to come home.* She had a new baby nearly every year, and she wanted the eldest, John, to inherit the Manor.

CHAPTER X

PLAGUE AND DISASTER

Nobody setting to heart the business of the kingdom, but everybody minding their particular profit or pleasure, the King himself minding nothing but his ease
3rd September 1665

' A citizen in Gracious Street, a sadler who had buried all the rest of his children of the plague, and himself and wife now being shut up and in despair of escaping, did desire only to save the life of [his] little child, and so pretended to have it received stark-naked into the arms of a friend, who brought it (having put it into new fresh clothes) to Greenwich "

3rd September 1665

" Did business, but not much, at the [Navy] office because of the horrible croud and lamentable moan of the poor seamen that lie starving in the streets for lack of money Which do trouble and perplex me to the heart . "

" And a letter signifying the Dutch to be in sight, with eighty saile God knows what they will do to us, we having no force abroad ready to oppose them

and I think of twenty-two ships we shall make shift to get out seven (God helpe us ' men being sick, or provisions lacking)

October 1665

" how horridly the skye looks, all a-fire in the night "

" and Paul s is burned, and all Cheapside I wrote to my father this night, but the post-house being burned, the letter could not go "

September 1666

(SAMUEL PEPYS Diary)

AFTER the Restoration of KING CHARLES II, the proud phrase "Royal Navy," was used officially for the first time for the King's ships But a name is not everything, and the Navy was disappointed in KING CHARLES II

The seamen of the *Royal Charles*, who had followed the body of ADMIRAL BLAKE to honourable burial in Westminster Abbey, were astounded when it was exhumed and hung at Tyburn Gallows, to show he had been a traitor and a criminal They were surprised when MR PEPYS at the Navy Office told them that they must wait for their pay, and annoyed when their

figure-head of OLIVER CROMWELL was taken down, and a mere Neptune given them instead.

Dan's righteous indignation would have been greater if he had not at this time got married to Jenny, the daughter of a London ale-house keeper. This gave him something to think about besides his grievances. When he went to sea again they returned four-fold. The food grew daily worse and worse; the beer had on occasion to be thrown overboard; the fish stank; the bread was mouldy.

In 1665, it was a very gaunt Dan who came ashore. The wars with the Dutch had begun again, and he had had a slight head injury. This had been roughly bandaged aboard ship; his eye was stopped with oakum and bound with sailcloth. His clothes were in rags, for no new clothes had been issued for a very long time. He hurried home to see Jenny. She had had no letter from him, nor he from her, for neither could write or read. He did not know that he had a son already two years old; nor how virulent was the plague that was devastating the city. It was with astonishment, and at last with terror, that he made his way through the mourning city to his father-in-law's house. Bells tolled for the dead; houses were shuttered and deserted: in a narrow alley he stumbled over a dead man. In the distance he saw, for it was evening, the lights of link boys in an approaching procession. Such people as were abroad fled from the street, knowing that the funeral of a plague victim was approaching, and fearing infection.

On many doors was painted a red cross, the sign that the plague was there. Supposing, he thought, he should see it on his own door! His father-in-law's tavern was in a narrow street: the houses overhead almost touched: refuse was thrown down the gutter in the middle of the cobbled street. Little clean, fresh air could reach the house. What chance could there be for Jenny if any in that street fell ill?

Dan burst into the house, frightening her for a moment with his wild looks. To his great relief, he found them all well, and spent an almost happy evening with Jenny, seeing his baby, and telling her about his adventures at sea. He showed her his pay-ticket (for the men were only given vouchers on board ship) and promised that he would go the very next day to the Navy Office,

get his three years' pay, and buy her a new warm cloak. Then he would take her away from dangerous London to the village of Gillingham, in Kent, where her brother lived.

Next day, he found the Navy Office on Tower Hill only too easily by reason of the crowd of seamen that gathered there, and lay and lounged about the doorway. Some of them were wounded men, and some of them were ill. All of them were angry and dejected, for they had waited for weeks and no pay was forthcoming. MR PEPYS came out after a while, and talked to them. He explained that the money had not arrived, and that he would do all he could to get it for them. The King had gone to Oxford, with his Court, on account of the plague, and Dan hoped that this accounted for the delay. He went to the office daily, but he never got his money. When, in despair, he returned to his ship, he was refused because of the plague infection. It was the same when he tried to get Jenny away. Londoners were prevented from leaving the city, to save surrounding towns and villages from infection. Dan and Jenny seemed to be in a trap, and must stay there to die of plague or starvation.

The plague reached their street, and Jenny became frantic for her baby. Dan had been doing his best meanwhile, and through a friend of his, who was a waterman, he, and the baby, and Jenny, all escaped. Jenny dressed up as a sailor, the baby was wrapped up in sacking, and they slipped quietly down the Thames by night. The cautious but kindly brother let them live in a barn, gave them new clothes, and made a bonfire of their old ones. The baby fell ill and Jenny thought he was dying of plague, but he was found only to have a cold in his head. Altogether it was a miraculous escape. If only Dan had not been without work and money they could both have been very happy. As it was they would have starved but for the brother, and he had his own family to think of.

Many English sailors had, Dan heard, taken service with the Dutch rather than starve at home. He almost found it in his heart to envy them. The English ships that he had served in under BLAKE, the *Royal Charles*, the *Loyal London*, and others were laid up, for there was no money forthcoming to man and provision them. He spent a wretched year, and at last took Jenny back to London, where he had found a poorly paid job on

the Thames. The plague had abated, but the troubles of London were not over.

There was a long spell of dry weather in the summer of 1666. In September a fire started, no one knew how, and whole streets were soon ablaze. The dry, wooden houses, crowded together as they were, had no chance against the flames. Dan and Jenny had little enough to remove from the one room in which they lodged. Dan put the boy Thomas on his shoulder (he was too big now for Jane to carry), and took them down to his waterman's boat. There they could see the blazing houses, and the people running away with their goods, and St. Paul's roof fall in. They wondered whether anyone would ever be able to stop the flames. The Lord Mayor himself was in despair. The King had ordered that houses should be pulled down to make a gap too wide for the flames to bridge, but the Mayor could get no one to listen to the order, and could only run distractedly up and down. It was, on the whole, a good time for watermen, and Dan for once made a little money taking people and their goods up and down the Thames to safety. Jenny he had sent back to Gillingham, and there she had to stay, for when the fire was over the houses that were left were full to overflowing.

Dan did not keep his job on the Thames when the fire was well over, for the regular watermen jealously guarded their rights, and hated strangers to compete with them. Another period of unemployment followed, and a new baby was born to add to the anxieties of Jenny and Dan. Dan was very bitter against a government that had dragged him away from his apprenticeship when he was a boy, and was now leaving him to starve. The country needed men too, for the sails of the Dutch ships were constantly seen closer and closer to the coast, and to the mouth of the Thames. He got work for a short time helping to put in stakes and chains across the Medway, to guard the English ships from attack. A disgraceful thing he thought it, that they could not be sent out to protect themselves, instead of being laid up, rotting and useless behind chains.

Knowing that there were in the Dutch Navy many English sailors who knew the tricks of the Thames estuary as well as he did himself, he wondered how long it would be before the Dutch realized how helpless the English Navy was, and attacked London.

And in June 1667, the Dutch came. On a high tide, with an easterly gale, the Dutch passed the barrier that had been made, and were in the Medway among the helpless English Fleet. Dan saw from the shore the *Royal Charles*, certainly unlucky with her changed name,¹ being ignominiously towed away, and no one able to prevent it. Other ships that had seen honourable service too, under BLAKE, were fired or captured. Dan heard an English voice from a Dutch ship call out "We did fight for tickets, now we fight for dollars", and saw men holding up bags and shouting that there was their gold. Dan heard that, when the immediate danger was over, those in authority tried to find a scapegoat to bear the blame of the disgrace, and that their wrath had fallen on PETER PETT (of the family of Petts who had built ships for Queen Elizabeth²), who had thought it more important to save his precious models of ships than attempt the hopeless task of saving the ships themselves.

When Dan reached Gillingham with the news of the Medway disaster, he heard that the Dutch had also been seen there. They had come to get food, and, to the great surprise of every one, had done no violence. Not a house had been burnt, not a person killed. They expected daily news of further disaster, and that the plague and fire would be followed by a sack of the capital. No calamity by this time seemed too terrible to contemplate. But the Dutch seemed unable to believe that the state of the British Navy was as bad as was really the case. They made peace not long afterwards.

Dan at last got work on board a ship bound for the west coast of Africa. It there took on board negroes, the prisoners of native chieftains, whom they sold to English and Spanish colonists on the other side of the Atlantic. Dan sometimes wondered what TOM LURTING, with his strange ideas about loving all men, would have thought to see the black people chained down under hatches during the voyage. Many died before they were resold as slaves, especially the mothers with young babies. The Puritans in the New England colonies, Dan found, were deeply concerned in this trade. Even Dan, not given to over-much reflection, thought it strange that men who had endured so much for freedom

¹ See Chapter VIII

² See Volume II

themselves should be so utterly indifferent to the horrors of the slave-trade. Dan traded for some years backwards and forwards in the "Middle Passage," till in 1675, he found himself back in London again. His son Thomas he found apprenticed to a mason. For Jenny had cleverly foreseen that there would be no lack of building after the Great Fire for many years. She had sold her hair to be made into a periwig, to get money enough to pay for him. Thomas was working on the ruins of old St. Paul's, on the site of which SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN's new cathedral was to be built. Dan was standing near one day, idly watching the work, when a man's voice made him turn sharply, with memories of Wootton suddenly fresh in his mind. The speaker was a stone-mason, and came from his own county and spoke his own dialect. For SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN was using some Cotswold stone and the famous skill of Cotswold builders in his work. CHRISTOPHER KEMPSTER, a Burford man, was his master-mason. Dan learnt that some stone was actually being quarried near Burford, and was brought in barges down the Thames. Now Burford, he had heard, was not far from Wootton. This set him thinking. A sudden longing had come on him to go to Wootton again, and see if his own people were alive and well, after nearly thirty years.

Dan managed to get just such a job, and started not long afterwards in a barge up the Thames and its tributaries ; and so came home at last. He came to Wootton again, if he had but known it, by the very way that his heathen Saxon ancestors had come, more than a thousand years before.

CHAPTER XI

DISSENT AND TOLERATION IN A COUNTRY TOWN

and the prisons full of ordinary people, taken from their meeting-place last Sunday
(SAMUEL PEPYS *Diary*, 31st October 1662)

IN 1661 Betty Corbet ran away to Wootton-on-the-Fosse to be married to a Quaker. For weeks her neighbours could talk of nothing else. No Corbet lady before had pleased herself in marriage in so disgraceful a fashion. Bitterly did her brother Edmund regret that he had not made earlier provision for his sister. He gave her no money and forbade her ever to come to Wootton Courcy again.



JOHN
THE QUAKER

Betty Corbet was very happy indeed for the first year of her marriage. Her husband was the school-master in Wootton-on-the-Fosse, he was related to the Fletchers of Nether Wootton, and like his cousin Simon, had been to Cambridge. He had become a member of the Society of Friends, many of whom were now to be found in Wootton-on-the-Fosse. John Brown worked hard in the grammar school for the first year of his marriage, and then suddenly found himself, with a wife and young baby to support, turned out of his school by Act of Parliament. Only those who would conform to the English Church might teach in the grammar schools. A little later on it was made illegal for him to come within five miles of the town, and yet another

law forbade any services to be held in any place whatsoever except in the churches. The penalty for defiance was imprisonment. To many Dissenters from the beliefs and practices of the English Church, emigration to the American colonies seemed their only hope. But John Brown did not want to leave England, for he thought it was his business to teach people the truth as he saw it. He did not want to run away merely because he was in danger.

So he defied the law and secretly started a little school in a room in his father's house, where he and Betty lived now. He refused, however, to make any secret of going to meeting on Sunday. The Quakers in Wootton even refused to lock the door of the room in which they met, for they believed in peace and would not make even the smallest resistance to their enemies. Their meeting-house was soon raided by the King's men, and John Brown was dragged off to the castle prison of Wootton with his relations and his friends. Fortunately, Betty had stayed at home that morning to look after her baby, so she was able to hurry for help to Richard Corbet, her cousin, who had already showed himself friendly.

Richard did all he could for John Brown, and when he was released he begged him to "be more wise and not get caught." More usefully, for he knew Brown's worth as a teacher and scholar, he gave him a house to be used as a school beyond the five-mile radius of the town. He said there was nothing in the law to prevent him from teaching there, and went to law to prove his point, at great expense. He sent his own son Humphrey there instead of to the grammar school, which was now managed by a foolish old man. It was a long way for the boys of Wootton-on-the-Fosse to come, but the parents were glad to have their sons well taught. There were no religious tests to pass before a boy might enter, and besides Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians, and French Protestants, there were the sons of churchmen.

The laws against Dissenters were not always rigidly enforced, and John Brown was sometimes able to escape imprisonment for long periods. One such time of peace was brought to an end through the treachery of a certain Mr. Gubb.

Gubb was a tradesman in Wootton. Perhaps he was related to that large family of Badmans about whom JOHN BUNYAN wrote. Certainly he had many evil traits possessed also by the hero (or more properly villain) of Bunyan's story.

Gubb was always careful to appear very good. In the days of OLIVER CROMWELL he went to service three times every Sunday, he dressed very plainly as the custom was, he professed to have the greatest interest in the poor people of the place, and liked to be seen giving them alms. He was, therefore, made an overseer of the poor, and it became his duty to collect the poor-rate and

divide the money so gained among the destitute people, of whom there were only too many. Now, since the King's power had been destroyed, there was no longer the strict supervision of the parish officers by higher officials that QUEEN ELIZABETH had intended when she made her Poor Law. The people of Wootton, lazy about public affairs, as people too often are, did not inquire closely into the accounts. But they did grumble about the amount they had to pay. Gubb said they ought not to grudge charity to the poor. He did not collect any money from himself, however.



MR GUBB AND THE BEGGAR-WOMAN

Worse still, he did not give the poor all the money he had. Much of it went in parish feasts, when he and the churchwardens and the parish clerk enjoyed more ale and food than was good for them. One evening, after leaving one such entertainment, a poor woman begged for relief. She had a young baby with her, and looked very weak and ill. She said she was trying to get to her home in Cirencester, and came from the north. She told a sad story of her husband and her husband's people having all been imprisoned for going to meeting, and related how her husband had died. She wanted food and shelter for herself and her

baby to help her on her way, but Gubb drove her out of the parish in order to save money. Sometimes he threatened women as well as men with the stocks if they applied to him for help.

He made a virtue of taking homeless boys as apprentices, and when several of them ran away before their time was up, he said their vagabond blood made them unfit for honest employment. The truth was that he beat and starved them, and if they did finish their time with him, he gave them such a bad character in the town that no one would employ them. When they became his journeymen, he paid them very low wages, and made them a weekly allowance from the poor-box. A similar advantage he offered to his particular friends, as a bribe lest they should reveal his shameful secrets.

By means of bribes and hypocrisy he managed to keep up appearances in the town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse. The persecuting laws, however, put him in a most difficult position. For once an appearance of virtue could not help him. Either he must be loyal to the congregation to which he belonged, and go to prison; or he must show himself a coward and go to the Established Church. Fear of the dangers and discomforts of prison won the day. Gubb conformed, and became a churchman. He was now, owing to the laws, one of the few tradesmen eligible for election to the town council—a most unfortunate result of the state of the law. For a time the enjoyment of power formed some compensation for the contempt with which he was treated. But Gubb dearly loved popularity; he found, moreover, that his shop was empty, and all his customers forsaking him. They went instead to a late journeyman of his, now in business for himself further up the street, and doing well.

At last, in despair, he came weeping to the kindly John Brown and asked to be allowed to come to meeting again, for he purposed to lead a new life. The very next "Lord's Day" Gubb set out for the meeting with his wife. She hoped he was really a reformed character, and was very happy indeed. He was most attentive during the meeting, and listened carefully to all that was said. Especial note did he take when the time and place of the next meeting were discussed. He went home well content, for he thought he had discovered a way to obtain security for himself, respect in the town, and money in his purse besides. The next Sunday came, and Mr. Gubb was too ill to leave his bed. His wife would have stayed to look after him, but he insisted she should go to the meeting and explain his absence. Mrs. Gubb did not return, nor had Mr. Gubb expected that she would. For he had been promised by the Government a large sum of money if he would reveal the places where Dissenters met on Sunday. The prison of Wootton was filled that Lord's Day with respectable citizens, John Brown being among the number, as well as the unhappy Mrs. Gubb.

Richard Corbet had yearly been growing more and more indignant at the progress of persecution. It was becoming increasingly clear to every one that such a state of affairs could

not endure for ever. Even those who had no real sympathy with the victims saw well enough that the trade of the country was being seriously hampered. Many people were reduced to poverty through losing their work while in prison. Many clothiers were afraid to undertake large orders, never knowing when dyers and weavers and tuckers on whom they depended might be haled away to prison. In Wootton it was hoped that one day Richard Corbet might become their Member of Parliament. For Parliament had made these laws and must be induced to repeal them. In 1685 this hope was fulfilled, and Richard Corbet was elected for the first Parliament of JAMES II.

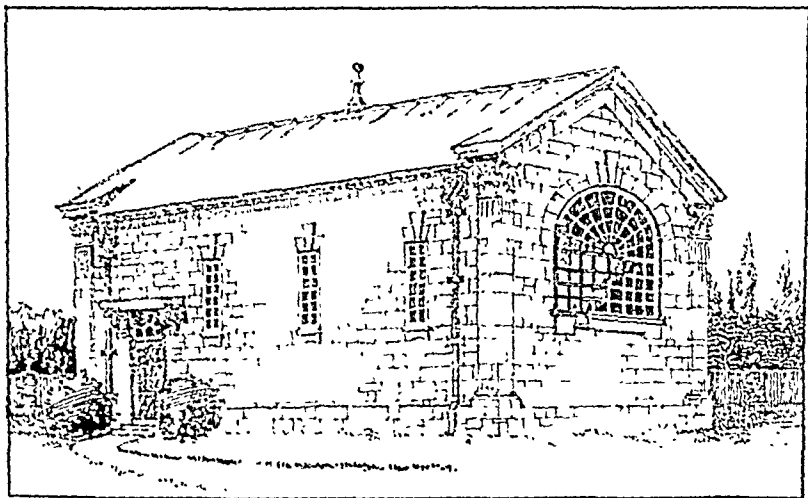
The townspeople knew little of politics, but they did know that the new King was a Roman Catholic, and they feared that their sufferings would increase. Some of the people actually joined the west country rising of the DUKE OF MONMOUTH, which ended disastrously at the Battle of Sedgemoor. JAMES became every month more hated and feared by his people.

In Parliament Richard Corbet had joined those members who were most opposed to the King, and who had been nicknamed Whigs. The King's party in the House were called Tories, and the two factions disagreed fiercely. Finally the Whigs despaired of KING JAMES II, as the Long Parliament had despaired of his father CHARLES I. They wanted a change of government, but they did not want another civil war. They wrote to JAMES II's own daughter MARY, who had married WILLIAM, PRINCE OF ORANGE, Stadholder of Holland. It seemed a strange thing to take her father's throne, but MARY was a Protestant and thought that the English should have a Protestant King. She would not be Queen unless her husband were made King, so the Whigs said that they should rule equally as King and Queen of England.

The people of Wootton heard little of all these negotiations, but when JAMES II had been King for less than four years (1685-1688) they heard that WILLIAM OF ORANGE, nicknamed the Oranger, had landed in the south of England, that he was on his way to London, and that KING JAMES had run away and taken his Queen and the baby Prince of Wales to France. There were no interrupted meetings then, and the Dissenters met openly to give thanks for their deliverance. As soon as possible in the year 1689, the Toleration Act was passed, allowing every one to worship

as they thought right. Every dissenting congregation in Wootton now began to collect money together to build themselves a meeting-house. Many of them carved the date of their deliverance—1689—over the door, so that their descendants should never forget that wonderful year.

Betty and John Brown, and their only son Corbet Brown, went to meeting every Sunday in the meeting-house shown in the picture. It was built of the best stone that money could buy, and by skilled workmen; its style was severely simple. Inside,



A QUAKER MEETING-HOUSE, BUILT 1689

the walls were bare and whitewashed, the windows were of plain white glass. It was a place of worship such as Sam Allbones had longed for when he broke the windows of the Church of Wootton Courcy. The clothes of the people who worshipped there were as plain and simple as the building itself. Betty wore a grey gown, with collar and cuffs of white lawn, and a bonnet. Her husband kept to the clothes that men had worn in the time of OLIVER CROMWELL, with a tall, wide-brimmed hat. Every one else now wore three-cornered ones, but the Quakers thought it worldly to be in the fashion. Good Quakers did not change their fashion of dressing for many generations. . . .

The reign of WILLIAM III was further memorable in Wootton-on-the-Fosse. In 1694 the Bank of England was founded, and tradesmen who put in their money were much happier than they had been when their savings were under their beds. Corbet Brown founded a private bank with five other Quakers, and Richard Corbet was one of his clients. Corbet Brown grew wealthy and lived in a new and comfortable house in the market-place. From his windows he could see the fine new Town Hall, of which the people of Wootton were justly proud.¹ It was built in 1680 on the site of the ruinous market cross. The master-mason was CHRISTOPHER KEMPSTER, who had been employed by WREN in the building of St Paul's Cathedral, and Thomas Slater, son of Dan the sailor, had helped to build it.

The money for this Town Hall was given to the burghers of the town by none other than Mr Gubb, who, as death approached, hoped he might atone for the wickedness of his life by leaving his ill-gotten gold to the town. He died of a painful illness, which his neighbours fully believed to be a judgment on him for his wicked life. They were sure he was possessed by a 'devil, and Gubb himself declared that he could feel the fiend leaping up and down in his chest and kicking him horribly. Richard Corbet's son, Humphrey (who was given an enlightened scientific education) would have pooh-poohed such an idea, but the townspeople still believed firmly in "possession," in witches and spells and demons, and the like. His neighbours did all they could to help him in his sad plight. Gubb was tied face downwards in a chair, and a great smoke made under his nose to smoke out the devil. Everybody was surprised when nothing happened, for Mr Gubb was even worse than he had been before, and died a painful death soon afterwards. In spite of his evil life his name was remembered by future generations with gratitude on account of the Town Hall, and it was supposed that so generous a benefactor must have been a good and kindly man.

¹ See Frontispiece

CHAPTER XII

WHIG POLITICIANS OF THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

"Sir, I do not say that he is NOT honest ; but we have no reason to conclude from his political conduct that he is honest."

(DR. JOHNSON, 1775.)

"Titles are shadows, crowns are empty things.
The good of subjects is the end of Kings."

(DEFOE, *The True-born Englishman*, 1701.)

THE eldest son of Sir Francis Corbet, M.P., Richard Corbet, had been educated as a boy by his father's friend, Simon Fletcher. Almost as soon as his mother had taught him his letters and simple words in the nursery horn books, he was promoted to learn his reading from the Bible and from FOXE's *Book of Martyrs*; from that to Latin and Greek, and Simon taught him to use and appreciate the manuscripts and the printed books in his father's library.¹

The Civil Wars prevented him from going to Cambridge and the Temple as Sir Francis had intended. Instead he undertook the management of the Wootton Abbas estate. Here he remained until 1685, a retired scholarly country gentleman, taking no active part in national affairs. He would much rather have been a soldier and fought under CROMWELL with his father, and he followed the events of his day, and the trend of opinion with close interest. Simon wrote to him whenever there was an opportunity of getting a letter across the unsettled country, and told him of his life as Chaplain in the Parliament Army. He would send him any political and religious writings of the day he thought would interest his old pupil. Chief among these were those by JOHN MILTON, a poet and scholar, who was made Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth after the death of the King. He read MILTON's *Areopagitica*, and approved his courage in demanding "the freedom of the Press," and later his defence of the execution of

¹ See Volume II.

KING CHARLES Richard was remarkable in an intolerant generation for his tolerant views, and he hated overmuch compulsion in government. He saw more clearly than his father (who, in spite of his advancing age, still continued in loyal service of **OLIVER CROMWELL**) the dangers of government by an army, in the years following the execution of **KING CHARLES**. He also disliked intensely the interference of Government with Everard Grantley, parson of Wootton Courcy, or indeed with any man for his religious opinions. He was glad when he saw his feelings expressed by **JOHN MILTON**, in his sonnet on "**OLIVER CROMWELL**,"¹ which contains these lines —

"Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war, new foes arise
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains,
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw"

He acted on his belief in religious liberty throughout the reign of **CHARLES II**, when he championed the Nonconformists of Wootton-on-the-Fosse against the persecution of the Government. It was characteristic of him that he himself conformed to the religion of the Established Church, which though not nearly wide enough (in his view) was wider than many of the dissenting sects.

The great chance of his life did not come till 1688, when he was over sixty, when the English people drove away **JAMES II** and chose **WILLIAM III** and **MARY** to be King and Queen instead. Richard always wished that his father, Francis Corbet, could have lived to see it, instead of dying sad and disappointed soon after the restoration of **KING CHARLES II**.

His election to the first Parliament of the reign of **JAMES II** in 1685, showed what confidence the people of Wootton had in him. The townspeople had never taken such an interest in an election before, for often they did not bother to vote. Indeed, many towns had allowed the right to elect members to fall into the hands of a small group of burghers. Wootton-on-the-Fosse people, however, had somehow managed to retain their rights. Anyone who had a hearth-fire could vote,² and in the days before

¹ Written in 1652

² Westminster and Taunton had this qualification till 1832

the election every householder came into the street with sticks and a tinder-box to light their fire and vindicate their right to vote. These pot-wallopers (as the people with hearth-fires were called) came boldly to the polling booths on election day, and in spite of the scowls of the mayor and corporation, bravely voted by show of hands for Richard Corbet.

As a Member of Parliament, Richard was whole-heartedly on the side of the Whig party, who believed in Parliamentary Government and religious toleration. When in 1689 the TOLERATION ACT was passed, Richard felt he had not lived in vain.

Richard Corbet died in 1694 (the same year as the Queen), worn out with the unwonted excitement of public life. WILLIAM III had thought highly of him, and this good opinion paved the way for the successful career of his ambitious son, Humphrey.

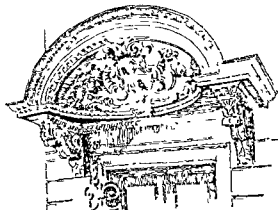
Humphrey had been educated at John Brown's Quaker school in Wootton-on-the-Fosse, and was sent to Newington Green, one of the Dissenting Academies, at the same time as DANIEL DEFOE. He had had an unusually good education there, and had studied modern languages, history, and geography, and had practice in public speaking. Most remarkable of all, he had handled scientific instruments and heard discussed the latest theories of the ROYAL SOCIETY¹ and the scientist, SIR ISAAC NEWTON—a far more liberal education than Oxford or Cambridge could have afforded him. He found that though many of the students came from Nonconformist homes, many were the sons of churchmen who judged that the Academies provided the best education then available.

He became an ardent Whig and determined to make a name for himself if possible, but he was far less scrupulous and upright than his father Richard. In his eagerness to get on he would on occasion correspond with the exiled JAMES II; for he wanted to feel quite sure that if another revolution restored JAMES and exiled WILLIAM III, he would still have a place in the Government. Yearly he became more important. WILLIAM III trusted him as much as he dared trust any of the slippery politicians with whom he had to deal.

From 1688 onwards, Members of Parliament had every chance of becoming powerful and important people, for WILLIAM III

¹ The Royal Society was founded about 1660.

never chose his own personal friends to be his ministers (as CHARLES I had so disastrously chosen the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM) but accepted a group of the more important members in the House of Commons or the House of Lords.¹ Members of Parliament had no official salaries until 1911, but nevertheless Humphrey Corbet grew very rich indeed. He was always careful to apply for any available Government posts, with much pay and little work, called sinecures. Titles were another reward for political service, and the long extinct title of Earl of Cotswold, which had



PORCH OF A TOWN HOUSE

once belonged to the Norman family of Umfraville,² was now revived.

Humphrey Corbet, First Earl of Cotswold, began to feel that his new wealth and importance required a grander setting in Wootton Abbas, where his father's homely Elizabethan manor seemed dull and inadequate.

In London he had a fine house (to which the porch in the picture belongs), a coach and six and many liveried servants. He often visited Hampton Court, where the King most liked to

¹ This group became known early in the eighteenth century as the Cabinet.

² See Volume II.

live, on affairs of State. What he saw of SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN'S new buildings there finally decided him to rebuild Wootton Abbas.

The old Elizabethan house was pulled down, and the stone used for a much larger and more magnificent building. Much new stone had to be brought from the quarries at Wootton-on-the-Hill before the new house was completed, and even then compared with many houses of that time it was but a simple and modest building. Blenheim Palace is an example of the really large house of the period. It was built by SIR JOHN VANBRUGH some fifteen years later than Wootton Abbas. VANBRUGH was so famous for his vast buildings that his epitaph ran like this :—

“ Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee ! ”

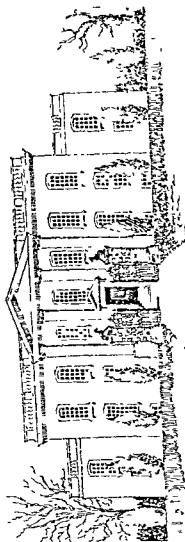
Blenheim was so bewildering in its size and magnificence that a wit remarked :

“ 'Tis very fine,
But where d'ye sleep, and how d'ye dine ? ”

The last question might well be asked when four hundred yards of stairways and passages divided the kitchens from the dining-room.

Even in the new house at Wootton Abbas there was a considerable distance between the two. In the old Elizabethan house, where Mary Corbet had learnt cooking and household management from her mother, the kitchens and bakehouses and dairies were close to the dining-hall, and the hot dishes were handed through the buttery hatch. She would have been astonished at the new plan, where the kitchens were all in the basement, but Lady Cotswold made no criticism. She kept an army of servants and a housekeeper, and had no personal knowledge of the problems of house management.

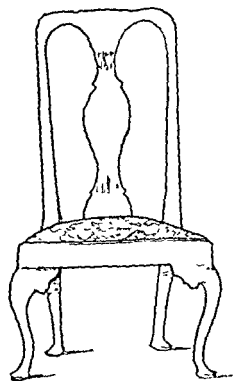
It may be worth noticing here that the word “ hall ” in the old house and in the new had quite a different significance. In the old it was the chief room of the house, where every one dined. In mediæval times most people had even slept in their hall, but as people grew more civilized and more particular they built bedrooms, and the lord and lady liked to have a private sitting-room.



THE COUNTRY SEAT OF A WING NOBLEMAN, 1695

In the new Wootton Abbas house the hall was no longer a room at all. Guests stepped into it through the great front door and from there were ushered into the withdrawing-room or dining-room or library. Modern houses are still arranged on this plan; even when the hall, instead of being large and lofty as at Wootton Abbas, with a fine staircase leading from it, is so reduced that there is scarcely room for the hat-stand. Tom Tucker's cottage in Wootton Courcy was, of course, in the old style, for he stepped straight into his one living-room, which occupied the whole of the ground floor of his cottage.

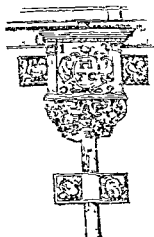
It was not only SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN's new building at Hampton Court which the Earl wished to emulate. The furniture must be in the newest style too. The chests and other solid oak pieces which had belonged to the old house looked out of place. An Elizabethan chest is excellent for storing linen, but inconvenient for keeping fine clothes. Lady Cotswold insisted on being provided not with a chest but with a chest of drawers. She had a fine walnut one on a stand, so that she need not stoop, with two little drawers at the top and three larger ones below. Every drawer fitted to perfection, and each had a lock; the very keys were a work of art. The front was decorated with marquetry (a pattern made by inlaying woods of contrasting shades), and there were mirrors and tables of similar design.



A QUEEN ANNE CHAIR

Lord Cotswold ordered for himself card tables, for he seldom spent a day or night without playing; and a walnut bureau with cunning secret drawers where he hid his will and other valuable papers. Hidden drawers for papers were most necessary to the earl, for he had many secrets and precious documents. His old house had had sliding panels, behind which, in the thickness of the wall, he secreted his bags of gold. These were no longer necessary, for he did not keep large sums of money at home, but divided his wealth between the Bank of England and the private Bank of Brown in the town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse.

Lord Cotswold surrounded his house with a magnificent park. The fields that had once been ploughed by Perkin Broadnib in the fifteenth century, and then made into one great sheep-run by the monks, were now laid out with splendid avenues of lime trees. The



LEAD RAIN-WATER HEAD ON LORD
COTSWOLD'S COUNTRY HOUSE

Cotswold sheep were sold to John Corbet of Wootton Courcy, to make room for a herd of fallow deer. Ornamental lakes with fountains and stone bridges were contrived, and stone temples in imitation of those at Versailles. At the end of the long avenues were iron gates, of beautiful workmanship, carefully guarded by porters. Beggars never ventured beyond these, nor did the villagers, except on Sundays, when they attended church in the nave of the thirteenth-century abbey.

The village knew little of the lives of the people in the big house. They never felt as friendly to the earl as they had towards his father, the kindly and honest Richard Corbet. The family, indeed, lived henceforward in a world of fashion apart from the

life of the village. Corbet Brown, son of John Brown, the Quaker, was sometimes heard to say that he would as soon be ruled by a despotic king as by so proud and aloof a Whig. But no one listened to him, for at that time the people of England had the greatest faith in Parliamentary Government and the Whig heroes of the Glorious Revolution.

CHAPTER XIII

A TORY AND A JACOBITE, 1685-1715

*" O what's the rhyme to porringer ?
Ken ye the rhyme to porringer ?
King James the Seventh had ae dochter,
And he gave her to an Oranger.
Ken ye how he requited him ?
Ken ye how he requited him ?
The lad has into England come
And ta'en the crown in spite of him."*

(A Contemporary Jacobite Rhyme.)

THE "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 was only glorious in the eyes of the Whig party. To the Tories, as the supporters of the Royal House of STUART were called, it was a calamity; to the Jacobites, a tragedy. The years 1688 and 1689 thus seemed to Richard Corbet of Wootton Abbas the most glorious time of his life; but to Hugh Corbet of Wootton Manor they brought poverty and exile.

Hugh Corbet was a staunch supporter of the STUARTS, a Royalist like his father and grandfather. He had a brief period of importance when the DUKE OF YORK (brother of KING CHARLES II) became King in 1685, as JAMES II. He stood high in the royal favour, and the King had him put into the House of Commons to strengthen the Tory party there. This was highly irregular, and should have been quite impossible, but many towns at this time had had their right of election tampered with.

The reign of KING JAMES was short and disturbed. Hugh was sent down to the west to quell the rebellion of the DUKE OF MONMOUTH, and was present when the Duke was defeated and captured at Sedgemoor. He returned to London to find that the King was becoming more unpopular every day. Few liked him personally, the people distrusted him, and every one hated the fact that he was a Catholic.

The reign lasted less than four years, and then the Whigs determined to ask JAMES' daughter MARY, and her husband,

WILLIAM the "Oranger," to come over and take the throne JAMES remembered with a shudder the fate of his father, CHARLES I. He was anxious, too, for his wife and baby son. He did not want the Prince to be stolen and brought up as a Protestant. Hugh thought it was the history of the Civil Wars all over again, and hoped he would be as gallant a soldier as his uncle and namesake. He was among the most loyal and devoted of JAMES' followers, and was chosen to help guard the Queen and her baby, and see that both arrived safely in France.

When Hugh Corbet arrived there, he heard that JAMES II had been made prisoner by the newly-crowned King and Queen, and his supporters were much afraid for his life. WILLIAM and MARY, however, were wiser and more kindly than OLIVER CROMWELL, they had no wish to be branded as murderers. It thus came about that a little later KING JAMES arrived safely in France. He at once began to make ready an army. He decided to attack WILLIAM from Catholic Ireland, which was very loyal to the Stuarts, and Hugh was put in command of English Jacobites,¹ French, and Irish. JAMES found it very difficult to enforce discipline in so mixed a troop, and the whole army was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne.² JAMES II was once more a fugitive.

There was nothing more for the Jacobites to do but wait in France, and hope for better days to come. Hugh's loyalty never wavered. He and his friends agreed that no more could be done while William lived, and they consoled themselves as best they could, planning the future, and writing sad songs about their cause.

Hugh stayed in France till both WILLIAM and MARY had been dead some years, and MARY's sister ANNE was Queen. The Tory Party in England, long eclipsed by the Whigs, began towards the end of the reign to gain influence and power. Hugh returned to London, hoping that he might be able to forward the cause of the exiled Prince, and be ready to receive him as King when QUEEN ANNE was dead.

Hugh found London very gay, noticeably bigger than when he went away and seemingly quite recovered from the Great Fire, the

¹ "Jacobite" means a follower of James. Jacobus is the Latin for James.

² There is an excellent account of this campaign in Macaulay's *History of England*.

Thames crowded with skiffs and rowing boats and barges ; the street criers more vocal than ever. He wished he had money to enjoy it to the full, as his cousin Lord Cotswold seemed to do. He had place and power, as Hugh hoped to have, if the Prince were restored to his rightful inheritance.

Hugh often saw his cousin in his fine coach, rattling over the cobblestones of Piccadilly, and once in the Horse Ferry coming from Lambeth to Westminster, but he did not wait on him in his house in the newly-built square near Hyde Park. Political rivalries had once more estranged the Corbets from the successful cadet branch of the family.

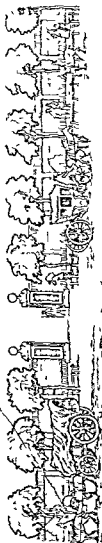


"FINE WRITING INK!"

"A BRASS POT TO MEND!"

CRIES OF LONDON

Party feeling in the city ran high. Men and women alike were more interested in the rivalry of Whigs and Tories than in anything else. Hugh arrived just at the moment when a preacher, DR SACHEVERELL, was being tried for preaching a sermon which seemed to favour the opinion of the Jacobites. It was very cheering to Hugh to find how favourable towards the Tories was the public opinion of the city. Fine ladies, in powdered wigs and patches, were carried to Westminster in their sedan chairs to hear the trial. Hugh noticed that Whig and Tory ladies distinguished themselves by wearing patches on opposite sides of their faces. He was then greatly astonished a few nights later to see Lady Cotswold in the Haymarket Theatre apparently wearing a patch



ICCADILLY IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE



THE HORSE FERRY AT LANNEITH IN 1710

on the Tory side of her face. He could only suppose that the lady had had some serious quarrel with her husband. But later, he found that the true explanation was that the poor lady, a staunch Whig, had the terrible misfortune to have been born with a mole on the wrong side of her face.

Hugh frequented the London coffee-houses, and there watched well-known writers and statesmen come and go. There, too, he would read his *Spectator*, and follow in it the adventures of Sir Roger de Coverley. He enjoyed the subjects discussed in the new paper,¹ whether of people, politics, literature, or current events, no less than the beautiful prose in which the papers were written. In the days of ADDISON and STEELE, newspapers were not intended to convey the latest excitement in hurried journalese; they were written by men of genius, and are as well worth reading to-day and almost as full of interest as they were in the reign of QUEEN ANNE.

The picture of English country life called up by ADDISON's papers on Sir Roger made Hugh think rather sadly of Wootton, and how he might have become, in his old age, as contented a country squire as the old knight. His younger brother John, who managed the estate of Wootton Courcy in the remote west country, must seem to his tenants their squire, rather than himself. It would be John's children, too, he reflected, who would inherit Wootton Manor; for Hugh's determination to serve the exiled Stuarts had made him decide against the responsibility of wife and children.

He had visited his brother, but had not stayed very long, both because his party needed him, and because he did not feel at home in the simple farm-house life that his sister-in-law had established in Wootton Manor. It was clear that though John recognized his responsibilities to Hugh as the head of the family, Hannah resented his ownership. John, she felt, had a better right to the estate on which he had worked since boyhood. Hannah (as became a great-niece of Simon Fletcher) had no sympathies with the STUARTS, and suspected Hugh of leading a gay and dissolute life in London and in France.

As the time of QUEEN ANNE's death drew near, the rivalry of

¹ The first number of Addison's *Spectator* was published in March 1711; the last in December 1712.

Whig and Tory grew fiercer Lord Cotswold was in close correspondence with the Court of Hanover, and Hugh was sent to France with letters from the Tory leaders to JAMES EDWARD, whom they hoped would shortly become JAMES III of England (His father JAMES II had died in 1701)

While Hugh was in France, news came of the death of QUEEN ANNE The plans of the Whigs were better than those of the Tories, and PRINCE GEORGE of Hanover was hurried to England and crowned King Diplomacy failed the Tories, and rebellion now seemed their only hope The "PRETENDER" came to Scotland with his loyal Jacobite followers, but was defeated

In the autumn of 1715, Hugh Corbet was a fugitive in the north of England, and JAMES III still a king without a kingdom Hugh knew himself to be a dying man, unable to do more for the Stuart cause He determined to return to Wootton and die there

Slowly and painfully he struggled southwards The desolate wild country of Westmorland, which a hundred years later poets found romantic, seemed to him "the most barren and frightful of any in England" Wild nature held no charms for him He was thankful when "in the middle of all the frightful appearances to right and left," he occasionally struck "pleasant manufacturing towns" His way took him through Manchester, which was growing yearly more important for the new trade in cotton stuffs Near this village, for it was still but little more, he was taken ill, and a kindly Lancashire countryman took him into his cottage and looked after him He received shelter and nursing, and a share of milk and oatmeal The family owned land on which they grew enough for their needs, and kept two lean cows Most of the time of the wife and family seemed to be spent in preparing cotton and linen yarn for the hand loom on which the father wove fustians to sell in Manchester It was not such beautiful stuff as the woollens that were woven in Wootton, nor was it so fine as pure linen Fine cotton material in the early eighteenth century was a secret known only to the East The idea of wearing a coarse cotton shirt would never have occurred to Hugh The family were evidently poor, and it seemed to Hugh that in this wet and dreary district there could be little hope of wealth

When he was strong enough to travel, he pushed on southwards again His way lay over desolate peat moors, and when he saw

horses ahead of him and had to leave the roadway, he thought he was going to be engulfed in the treacherous ground. He feared that the distant horses might be the King's troops in search of fugitives, but as they approached he saw they were only pack-horses bringing coal to Manchester from South Lancashire.

Sometimes he was fortunate enough to find stretches of Roman road, and there was no mistaking these, wherever they had been left and not quarried away for building stone. No people but the Romans had ever built solid roadways of stone in England, and in places the track still ran as straight and as smooth as though it had never endured the wear and weather of seventeen centuries. Other roads were a sad contrast, and of little credit to English skill. They were mere cart-tracks, whose worst holes were filled in with stones or gravel, or logs of wood. On such roads Hugh's horse would be knee-deep in mud, and splashed to the ears. As Hugh neared Wootton, his pleasure in recognizing the familiar landmarks and in noticing the friendly prosperity of the country was held in check by memories of the wretched road he would have to travel from Wootton-on-the-Fosse to Wootton Courcy. The pack-horses that took woollen cloth to Blackwell Hall, in London, had so destroyed the road that it was often quite impassable. December, he reflected sourly, was no time for a man to travel.

The Hugh Corbet who arrived exhausted at Wootton Courcy was so different from the fashionable courtier he had once been that John hardly recognized him. Hannah nursed him till his death, and he was buried beside the Hugh Corbet who had died at Marston Moor in the service of the House of STUART.

In the little rectory that had once been the house of the stormy and Protestant Simon Fletcher, and the gentle, orthodox Everard Grantley, now lived a bluff, hearty, country gentleman. He pulled his surplice over his hunting-coat (indifferent that spurs and boots still showed), and gabbled the burial service for the dead Jacobite. He suspected the man of being an enthusiast (dreadful thought), or worse still, tainted with popery. He said nothing, however, for he did not care to enter upon political or religious discussions. He had lived at Wootton since 1680, without attracting unfavourable opinions from any party, or any government, and he meant to remain there till his death, like the legendary Vicar of Bray "whatsoever king may reign."

CHAPTER XIV

A PIONEER LANDOWNER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

" . . . Who is there among our gentry, that does not entertain a dancing-master for his children as soon as they are able to walk? But did ever any father provide a tutor for his son to instruct him betimes in the nature and improvements of the land which he intended to leave him?"

" . . . The three first men in the world were a gardener, a ploughman, and a grazier. . . . If heraldry were guided by reason, a plough in a field arable, would be the most noble and ancient of arms "

(ABRAHAM COWLEY, *Of Agriculture*.)

IN the very year that PRINCESS ANNE became Queen of England, George Corbet was born in the new house at Wootton Place. He was the first of Lord Cotswold's children to be born there, and the only one to outlive babyhood. His father was inordinately proud of him, and never tired of planning his future career. He expected him to carry on the Whig traditions of the family. When the alarm and excitement of the Jacobite rebellion had subsided, and KING GEORGE I was safely established on the throne, surrounded by Whig advisers, the opportunities for a great career as a Whig statesman seemed endless.

George Corbet, however, who went to Cambridge in 1720, there developed quite new ambitions of his own, and could not be brought to take any interest in politics. He did not care for life in London, nor indeed for anything in the world except a country life. The earl, his father, would have the more readily understood his son's tastes if his interest had been primarily in the fine park that he had laid out with such care, or in the hunting, shooting, and fishing which a country estate provided. But George Corbet's interests were all in soils and crops and manures, which seemed peculiarly unpromising subjects to the disappointed earl. George Corbet's novel pre-occupations were not as unusual in the eighteenth century as Lord Cotswold thought. There were many other landowners of his son's generation who shared his interest in the land. RICHARD BRADLEY, the botanist, under

whose influence George came during his time at Cambridge, was responsible for arousing his interest in scientific agriculture. To use his scientific knowledge of plants for the improvement of farming methods in England was BRADLEY's ambition, and all his work in laboratories was directed towards this end. Farmers were content, he would say, as long as their crops grew, he wanted them to grow wheat and barley and clover and roots as well as they could possibly be grown. Farmers wasted their land by letting it lie fallow. BRADLEY knew how to feed the soil with the right manures so that this rest was unnecessary, and waste was avoided.

George Corbet had always been interested in farming. When his father had been away in London, he had amused himself watching and helping in farm work in Wootton, but he had always regarded farming methods as fixed and immutable. These new schemes of experiment and improvement opened up undreamed of opportunities.

He sometimes accompanied BRADLEY when he rode out to villages in the fen country round Cambridge, and listened as he explained his new schemes to conservative, stolid, and scornful farmers. On these occasions BRADLEY would criticize the methods they saw in operation as they rode along. It was the waste of land he specially deplored. In each village one-third of the plough land every year was left fallow, for barley and wheat were the only crops generally grown, and the richest soil cannot grow these year after year without a rest.

BRADLEY, however, knew that root and other crops do not take the same chemicals from the soil as corn does, and may therefore be grown in the fallow year without harm. He knew, too, that peas and beans leave nitrogen in soil where they have grown, which is most valuable to corn, so he was ready with suggestions for new rotations of crops, by which each year's crop might be made useful to the one that succeeded it. In this way land need never be idle, and yet be expected to produce more than ever before.

These chemical and botanical mysteries fascinated George Corbet, and he entirely neglected his classics while he pursued his new studies, nor did theory alone satisfy him. He longed to make practical experiments at home, and the idea of a political

career paled before the desire to become a pioneer among land-owners. He had long and fierce arguments with his father in his vacations, and the longer he thought and talked about it, the more he longed to control the management of farm land.

Wootton Abbas was an ideal place for his purpose, for the common pastures and arable of the old open field village had been enclosed in the reign of HENRY VIII. There were thus no villagers with common rights as in Wootton Courcy and Nether Wootton, to dispute and resist any innovations George Corbet might wish to make.

After much discussion, Lord Cotswold resigned himself to his son's ambitions. The death of a tenant farmer made it possible to take over the management of some of the best land, and George Corbet settled down to scientific farming with tremendous enthusiasm.

Men from Wootton, who had worked on the land all their lives, laughed at the new-fangled ideas, and prophesied disaster. George Corbet, taking a late stroll round his fields one evening, caught a fragment of conversation as he passed.

"A wheat year, a barley year, a fallow year, that was the old plan for arable land," he heard one man say. A little group were leaning over a gate looking at his fine barley. "Squire tells me there'll be peas in this ground next year, then wheat, then back to barley again after that, and never a year to rest."

George Corbet chuckled to himself and wished the men "Good-night." He enjoyed working out this and other variations of crop rotation, and testing the effects. He wondered whether smallholders would ever change their mind about the time-honoured rotation of crops (wheat—barley—fallow) when they saw how profitable it could be, or whether they would cling to the old methods sanctified by custom.

Now, it must not be supposed that George Corbet confined himself to the problem of arable land. He was quite as much interested in his cattle and his sheep.

Winter feeding of cattle was his first interest (made easy by the root crops he was now able to grow), but he soon began to wish he had better animals. The cows at Wootton Abbas were mostly white. Their remote ancestors, tradition said, had belonged to the monks. Strong, bony beasts they were, very different

from modern herds, which are kept solely for milk and meat, for it was the custom to use oxen for all farm work where horses or machines are used to-day. The great white animals drew ploughs and harrows in teams of four or more, and as many as eight were sometimes harnessed to the waggons in hay time and in harvest.

George Corbet found that horses, if more expensive to feed, were stronger and better for all this work, and he began to wish he had a somewhat different herd, cows that gave plentiful rich milk, less bony animals which Wootton-on-the-Fosse butchers would buy readily for meat. Some landowners, he found, were buying from abroad, and he decided to do the same. This was indeed an expensive and hazardous venture, such as none but wealthy men could afford, but George Corbet felt that on such men rested a real responsibility for improving British stock.

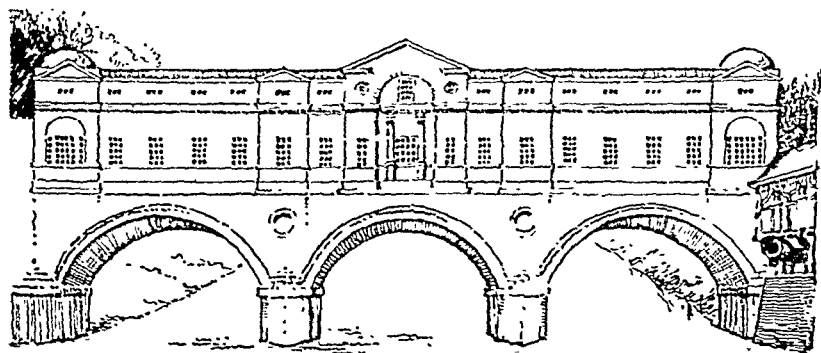
There was great excitement in the neighbourhood when it was rumoured that two young bulls had actually been ordered from Holland, and of all people the most excited was a boy who lived at Wootton Manor farm. This boy's name was Corbet too, and though the relationship had long been forgotten, he was actually a distant cousin of the wealthy Corbets of Wootton Place. His name was John, and his father, another John Corbet, farmed the land of the old Manor of Wootton. Young John, when he heard about the bulls, and that his great friend, the bailiff at the Place, was to fetch them from the port of Bristol, determined that he must share this great adventure. The bailiff was glad to have a willing boy to help him, so young John saddled his pony one morning before daybreak, and rode proudly away on the long journey to Bristol.

John had never been so far from home in his life. He had never seen the sea, never seen a larger town than Wootton-on-the-Fosse. When they had jogged briskly along for some twenty miles, the last of the familiar hills disappeared, and he felt himself to be indeed in a foreign land.

There is no space to tell of their adventures on the way, of the fine horsemen that passed them on the great road (each one of whom in turn John made sure was a highwayman), of the gaily-dressed men and women in the white city of Bath, of the new bridge over the Avon, and of how before they reached their destination, John caught a glimpse of the Bristol Channel shining in the sun.

Arriving at Bristol, John was astonished to find that Bristolians used sleds instead of carts and to see ships at anchor seemingly in the heart of the city. He wished that big ships from the West Indies and the American Colonies, from Europe and Ireland, came sailing up the little river at Wootton-on-the-Fosse as here they came up the great gorge of the Avon.

Very early on the morning after they reached Bristol, John and the bailiff went down to the quay and found the Dutch ship had arrived, and was being unloaded.



PULTENEY BRIDGE, BATH

At last two little red bulls were driven down the gangway on to the quay, looking very frightened and bewildered. George Corbet, who had come in his coach to superintend, handed them over to the bailiff with many injunctions about the return journey, as to the food they should eat, and the slow pace at which they must be driven.

It was indeed a long and weary business, though they enlivened the way by falling in with drovers who were also in charge of sheep and cattle. At last John saw Wootton-on-the-Fosse in the distance, and when they rode through, every man, woman, and child came running out to see them pass. John felt as proud as

the bulls were his own, and made up his mind to have some on his farm later on

These bulls grew up into fierce animals with thick, strong necks, and wicked little eyes. They were mated with the white cows of Wootton Abbas, and their children and grandchildren in time made up the fine new herd at Wootton Place. The cows gave such milk as had never been dreamed of before, and people came from all over the west country to see them, and would buy some for their own farms if they could afford it.

Before old Humphrey Corbet died, he had become fully reconciled to his son's farming enthusiasms, and was immensely proud of him. He had wanted him to serve his country as his ancestors had done, and he realized that by leading the whole district in scientific agriculture he was indeed doing a very special work for England. He was much interested in young John Corbet, of Wootton Courcy, who, he knew, longed to adopt the new methods, and in the cattle John bought from the Place, which were to be seen on the common pastures of the Woottons, among the lean village cows. John Corbet longed to enclose Wootton Courcy land as the land of Wootton Abbas had been enclosed two hundred years earlier. He would have liked to have all the land belonging to the manor under the sole management of his father and himself, instead of having to share much of it with the other villagers as was the custom. He was always expecting his prize cattle to catch diseases from the village cows. While his father lived he could do little, and the villagers, he knew, hated any change. The family at the Place, however, were sympathetic, and would give him any help in their power. This was later to have the most far-reaching effects, not only on John Corbet himself, but on every villager in Wootton.

Of George Corbet, who shared with his sovereign GEORGE III not only a Christian name, but also the nickname "Farmer George," there remains but little to be said. He married, and had two sons. Robert was as interested in agriculture as even his father could have wished, and was a friend of "TURNIP" TOWNSHEND, the Whig politician, and also of "COKE OF NORFOLK," another pioneer in scientific farming. Robert was very fond of hunting, and when still a young man was thrown and so

seriously injured that he became an invalid for life, and turned to literature instead of farming for interest and amusement. Joshua Corbet, unlike his brother, took not the faintest interest in the country, and had to leave England at an early age owing to his wild and extravagant habits. This was a great grief to "Farmer George," who was a devoted father. He grew extremely fond of his son Robert's children, Anthony and Richard, and insisted that they should always live with him at Wootton Place. He hoped they might come to take as great an interest in the estate as their father had done before his accident.

CHAPTER XV

A WEAVER'S APPRENTICE AND THE NEW MACHINES

"Among these dark Satanic mills"

(WILLIAM BLAKE, *Poems*)

At thirteen, Elijah Elworthy was apprenticed to Sam Dyer, weaver, of Wootton-on-the-Fosse. His father, a yeoman in Wootton Courcy with a family of ten, hoped that in three or four years his son would be able to set up as a master weaver himself. For Elijah lived in the eighteenth century, when the craft guilds, with their strict rules about a seven-year apprenticeship, had long disappeared.

Elijah walked in to Wootton-on-the-Fosse to begin work. He was brought in to a large room where several looms were working, and set to watch a journeyman at work on a single loom. Later he was shown a broad loom, and told to work on it with another journeyman. He had to throw the shuttle back to him through the warp threads, for a broad loom could not be worked single-handed.

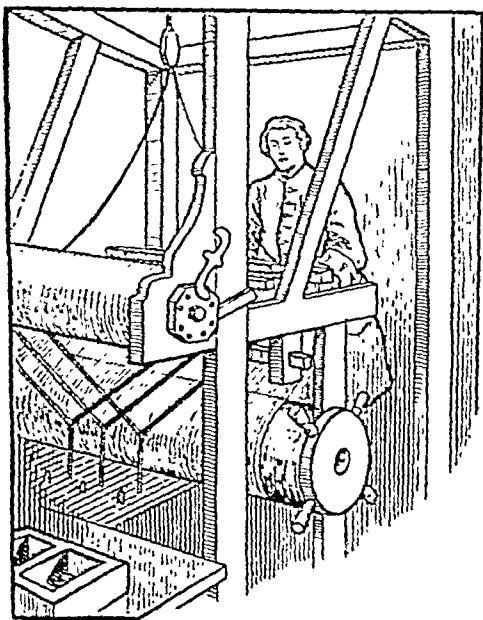
When he had spun his first yard of broadcloth he felt very proud indeed, but the master weaver was less satisfied. He pointed out irregularities, and a careless joining of the threads; he said it should have been woven much more loosely, and looked like worsted and not woollen cloth at all. Muttering something about a 'prentice hand, he settled down again to his own loom. Dyer was a thin, pale man, with a stoop brought on from his work, and a constant cough, as if he never had quite enough fresh air.

Elijah was allowed to go home for Sunday, and sometimes he was let off as early as noon on Saturday, and told to take yarn to the villages near Wootton Courcy, and to Wootton Courcy itself. Before daybreak, on Monday, he would have to start back with a load of spun yarn on his shoulders, the week's work of the cottage spinners, but he thought this worth while for the sake of going off on Saturday afternoon when the other apprentices were still hard at work at their looms.

Elijah had another secret advantage from collecting some of the

yarn himself. He knew who were the best spinners and who the worst, and was always careful not to put his sister Mary's spinning into his own weaving if he could avoid it. His mother's was always evenly and lightly spun. He told Mary the weaver would not buy her yarn, but he knew that weavers really had to take what they could get, in fact, in order to get enough they would even struggle down the Nether Wootton track in winter.

Dyer was a good master and taught his apprentices thoroughly. He wanted them to be masters of their trade, and they had to



THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE
(After HOGARTH)

know about many different kinds of cloth. Elijah learnt about serges and druggets and cantaloons, sagathies, kersies, and shalloon for linings. He was sure that the scarlet cloth made in Wootton was as good as the boasted reds of the city of Gloucester, and that the Spanish medley cloth, dyed in the wool, and the speciality of his town, was the best of all.

Elijah learnt to be proud of his trade, and to take the greatest

pride in his craftsmanship, but he learnt too that weaving is not for the lazy man. Dyer kept him to his loom on occasion for sixteen hours a day, till his legs and his back and his shoulders ached, while his eyes smarted with weariness. This did not happen every day, however, and he was often sent to the clothiers for orders, or to the tuckers and shearers and dyers, with cloth to be finished. When the first had shrunk and rubbed it, and the second had clipped it, and the third had changed its colour, it was not easy to recognize the original piece of weaving. Here was plenty of room for cheating, and Dyer warned his apprentices against bringing home to him some badly woven substitute for his good cloth.

After three years, Elijah became a journeyman, and could earn a shilling a day when trade was brisk. In slack periods he made himself a loom, that he might have one of his own when he set up for himself as a master weaver. At hay time or at harvest, if trade were slack, he worked in the fields, and enjoyed the change from the stuffy indoor life. Dyer would grumble then, and say such work would spoil his touch at the loom.

Journeymen in Wootton had friendly societies among themselves, and from his fellow-weavers in meetings of his own society, Elijah soon learnt how the clothiers were slowly reducing the prices paid to weavers for their cloth, and how hostile towards them the weavers had become. Silas Dyer, the master weaver's son, told Elijah about an old law, made in the reign of Queen ELIZABETH, called the Statute of Apprentices.¹ This law gave Justices of the Peace power to regulate the rate of wages paid, though for a long time the employers had paid what they chose, and the Justices had not interfered. West country weavers wanted this law to be enforced once again, and a petition was sent to Parliament.

There was great excitement in Wootton-on-the-Fosse when the success of the petition was announced. They confidently expected that, with Parliament behind them, their wages would improve. The clothiers were correspondingly indignant. "Prosperity" Brown (who had already the most flourishing clothing business in the town, and would brook no opposition from any man), swore that he would put the matter before the Justices at Quarter

¹ This is described in Volume II.

Sessions. Silas only laughed, and said that even prosperous clothiers could not get round an Act of Parliament.

Silas was wrong. At Quarter Sessions the clothiers and other employers of labour in the town were so eloquent that the Justices were convinced that the statute was old-fashioned and quite misplaced. "Prosperity" Brown said that the intricacies of the trade were far too difficult to be dealt with by any outside interference, even that of Government. He admitted that the rates paid per piece for cloth in recent years was certainly, and most unfortunately, lower than in the past. This, however, was owing to the increase of the rival woollen trade of Yorkshire, and the competition of Lancashire cottons in the market. These north country materials were being woven on a new loom, which doubled the output of each weaver. (This loom had a patent shuttle, invented by a man called THOMAS KAY, in 1733, and one man could now manage a broad loom.) The cost of producing the material was thereby lowered, and if west country cloth did not sell more cheaply too, custom would be lost. Elijah and his fellow-journeymen listened with mingled interest and indignation to these explanations. They only half believed the story of the new looms, and would not readily have consented to use them, even if Brown had said that they were wholly suitable to west country stuffs.

Unlike the Justices, themselves in some cases employers, they could see nothing but danger for their craft in the principles which "Prosperity" Brown laid down at the end of his peroration. He said that trade would only prosper when the Government was content to allow each trade to manage its own affairs, and let wages find their own level. The weavers were not at all prepared to allow fate to decide what money they should earn. This new "let-alone" idea seemed a menace to their security. When it was known that the law they had asked to be put in force had been entirely repealed, they all came out on strike.

Country weavers crowded in, and an angry mob gathered in the market-place. As the days went by, Brown became more and more exasperated. One evening when a group of young journeymen had been singing popular ballads deriding the clothiers, he came angrily out. From the steps of his front door he told the men that they were spoiling their own trade by their obstinate

behaviour. If they would not work, they could starve. He could manage without them, and had brought in strangers to work on his own premises on the new type of loom.

This was a serious matter for the weavers, for they knew that all the clothiers in the town would stand by Brown, as they themselves stood by their own craft. They were growing hungry and anxious, as the strike dragged on. A blind hatred of the new machines came on them, till at last the wilder spirits determined on a more desperate course. They raided the room where the strange weavers were working. Before Brown could call in soldiers the men had been dragged from their looms, sticks and chairs used to destroy the "devilish invention," and new woven cloth and broken looms were hurled on to the open fire that burnt at one end of the room.

For a time the men were blind to all that was happening, apart from the destruction of the looms. A weaver was lying motionless in a corner, the chimney had caught fire, and the flames were spreading. By the time the soldiers arrived, a cry had gone up that Brown's house was burning, and that his children were in bed there.

Silas and Elijah had been among those journeymen who had started the raid. Elijah was horrified when he realized all that they had done. He himself was one of those who made their way into the burning building and carried out the children. He brought down a child and carried him through the soldiers to the edge of the crowd, they made no attempt to stop him, and a friendly neighbour prevented him from returning to the scene of action. Enough arrests would be made that night, the man thought, and so it proved. He had seen one of the strange weavers carried out, and greatly feared the man was dead.

Destruction of the property was in itself a hanging matter, coupled with arson and murder, the case of the people of Wootton who had been arrested could scarcely have been worse. Silas Dyer was found guilty, and with five others hanged in the market-place for all to see. Elijah, who felt that he deserved as much or as little as Silas the extreme penalty, was expected to attend the execution as he would have attended a funeral.

When it was over, Elijah felt he could remain in Wootton no

longer. He sold the loom that had once been his pride for what it would fetch, and wandered away, taking the northern road with little idea of where he was going, or of what he meant to do. He fell in with a cheap-jack who needed a strong lad to help him with his pack, and the journeyman weaver was glad of such humble employment and the cheerful company of the pedlar. Listening to the cheap-jack's stories of strange and distant places, he began to forget his hatred of "Prosperity" Brown, and his feeling that all the world was oppressed by the rich and powerful. He heard of the prosperous, independent weavers in Yorkshire, who swaggered about with £5 notes in the band of their hats, and called no man master. One day, Elijah thought he would find Yorkshire, and work there as a weaver again, and the cheap-jack said that he would go there himself later in the year, and Elijah agreed to travel with him till then.

They went to Bristol, still the most important town in England after London. Pack-horses and waggons passed them carrying iron and lead, flax and pitch and tar and dyes, and in a terrible state this traffic left the roads. At their worst they were quite impassable, and Elijah and his companion took to the fields; at their best they were only made of gravel and often so cambered that waggons and coaches turned over when they drew to one side: they were water-logged and soft, too, for Elijah lived before MACADAM had been made surveyor of the Bristol Turnpike Trust, and had remade the roads by new methods.

The cheap-jack bought glass in Bristol, to sell elsewhere; and then made his way through Gloucestershire northwards to the potteries. He did not expect to do much trade in that wild and desolate region, but he wanted to buy pots to sell in other parts of England. There were no canals then, to bring the work of the potters to every town in England, and the pedlars were welcomed by manufacturer and housewife alike. Without them wooden platters and pewter bowls must have been used everywhere.

In the potteries Elijah heard stories of a strange preacher called JOHN WESLEY, who had visited and preached to the people, and who had often been roughly handled by them, for the inhabitants seldom saw a stranger, and regarded all visitors as enemies.

Yet it was not only in the wild parts of England that JOHN

WESLEY was threatened with violent treatment. It needed but little encouragement in those days to rouse civilized towns to riot and disorder when news came that he was coming to preach.

Elijah arrived one day in a town, hoping to lighten his pack there, and found all the people too much taken up with the preacher to think about it bargains. He and the cheap-jack joined the crowd in the market-place, interested to see what would happen, for the people seemed furiously angry, there was such a hubbub of talk that it seemed impossible that any man could make himself heard. Elijah put his pack on the ground and cautiously stood on it (glad that it chanced to contain mainly Manchester fustians and not frail pots). He could see JOHN WESLEY clearly: a lean, elderly man, curiously neat in his dress, with smooth white hair, and very gentle in manner, who stood facing the crowd calmly and steadily.

The uproar increased, and the mob leader came so close to WESLEY that it seemed he would strike him. Elijah himself was conscious of rising excitement, but at the moment when the crowd might have been expected to launch itself on the preacher, WESLEY took the leader gently by the hand. The effect was magical, the leader suddenly subsided into a reasonable orderly person, and found himself promising to quiet his companions.

At last, in a breathless, and no longer hostile silence, WESLEY began to speak. There was no further interruption, save tears from those whom the discourse specially touched, and some men and women were utterly overcome by their sense of sin and their desire to live a new life. When the emotional excitement had become almost unbearable, a hymn was begun. It went falteringly at first, for the people had to learn words and tune from those of WESLEY's own friends and followers who were present and who started the singing. But at last the whole company made shift to join in with such words as they knew. To worship the Lord by singing a rousing tune so different from psalm-singing was a new and thrilling idea.

The last that Elijah saw of WESLEY was when he rode away with his brother CHARLES, the author of the hymn they had learnt the night before, and they were giving thanks for their deliverance from the anger of the mob in another hymn that CHARLES WESLEY had written for such occasions —

“Thine arm has safely brought us
A way no more expected
Than when thy sheep
Passed through the deep
By crystal walls protected.

Thy glory was our rearward
Thine hand our lives did cover ;
And we, even we
Have passed the sea,
And marched triumphant over.”

The following winter Elijah took leave of the cheap-jack and settled down to his old trade in new surroundings. In the West Riding of Yorkshire he worked for a weaver till he had money enough to buy a loom of his own. He prospered, and brought up a large family. All his sons became weavers, and Elijah was well content with their prospects in life. He saw clearly that as long as the new machines were in the hands of the workers, and not of employers such as Brown, they could be a means not to lower wages and poverty, but greater output, and much prosperity. He died ignorant of the further changes in industry that were to ruin the prosperity which his sons and grandsons had come to take as a matter of course for hand-loom weavers.

CHAPTER XVI

THE COMPLETE TRADESMAN

"We are speaking now to a tradesman, who sets up a shop, or a warehouse, and expects to get money, one that would be a rich tradesman, rather than a poor, fine gay man, a grave citizen, not a peacock's feather, for he that sets up for a Sir Fopling Flutter, instead of a complete tradesman, is rather fit for an hospital of fools than to undertake trade, and enter upon business."

(DANIEL DEFOE, *The Complete English Tradesman*, 1725)

"Serious grave men, men of soure complexions, money-getting men, that spend all their time in getting, and next in anxious care to keep it men that are condemn'd to be rich, and always discontented, or busie For these poor-rich-men, we anglers pity them."

(ISAAC WALTON, *The Compleat Angler*, 1653)

IN the early years of the eighteenth century, Brown's Bank, in the town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse, was a prosperous and much respected firm. John Corbet Brown, the only son of Corbet Brown, the founder of the bank, was to be well provided for. Since the Toleration Act had ended persecution, the town had flourished. The panic caused by the Jacobite rebellion once over, England settled down to the sober business of making money. The sons and grandsons of the Puritans of the seventeenth century, who attended their new meeting-houses and kept the Sabbath as gravely as ever, were almost without exception engaged in trade. They were not allowed by law to help govern the country, to serve in the Army or Navy, or to go to the universities. Consequently, they turned to trade, and a great success they made of it. There were certainly opportunities of wealth in Wootton, for it lay in the richest part of England, and the townspeople made the most of their opportunities. They deposited their wealth in the trusted Quaker Bank of Brown in the market-place, and when they wanted capital to extend their business or for speculation, they also borrowed from Brown's at good interest.

Early in the reign of GEORGE I, Brown's Bank was lending several

merchants of the town money to invest in the South Sea Company, which was expected to be about to make huge profits by its trade. It seemed a most delightful way of getting money for nothing, and stern Puritans did not think this new gambling at all wrong. The old mediæval idea that it was always wrong to let out money at interest was quite discredited, and the whole of England was seized by a feverish desire to make money by investments. The strangest companies were started, and one to import wild jackasses from Spain found subscribers. But the South Sea Company seemed likely to pay the highest interest to those who lent their money, and shares of one hundred pounds were actually sold for a thousand pounds. This could not last, though people were at first too excited to consider carefully. Then suddenly they grew afraid, and tried to sell their shares, but no one would buy, for there was a rumour that all was not well with the trade of the company.

Those who had paid so heavily for their shares were panic-stricken, and then the news came that the company had failed.

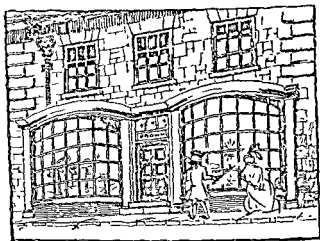
In Wootton, every one who had deposited their gold in the bank rushed to it, hoping to get it again before it was too late. Those too, who had in their possession bank-notes (which had seemed so much more convenient than bags of gold), hurried to the distracted Corbet Brown to change them. They were all wishing that they had kept their gold in a stocking as their fathers had done before them.

The news had already reached the bank that several merchants of the town were ruined. The money they had lost by the failure of the company had much of it been borrowed from Brown's. If they could not pay him, neither could he pay the angry and frightened crowd that thronged the market-place. The bank had to suspend payments and closed down. Corbet Brown had a stroke and died. His eleven-year-old son John was left penniless. The prosperity of the town seemed for the time to be gone for ever.

Corbet Brown's son was rescued from his plight by a cousin, a draper of the town, who took him into his shop as an apprentice. Corbet Brown had never approved of him for he was not a Quaker, he liked enjoyment, and he was fond of fine clothes. The new apprentice soon found that these things were no dis-

advantage to himself, though he at first resented being kept at work all day when his cousin and master was enjoying himself. For John Corbet Brown was determined to make the best of his ill-fortune and do well as a draper. In his cousin's absence he had to manage the customers, and became a skilful salesman, and in a few years knew more of the business than the owner.

He learnt that good lace came from Stony Stratford, woven stockings from Leicester, ribbons from Coventry, and cotton



THE DRAPER'S SHOP

quilting for petticoats from Manchester. He found that there was a good sale for all these things, and he was careful never to allow his master to let the stock run low.

Fussy housewives found him painstaking and efficient in the shop. He would bring out the whole stock of heavy Taunton serges, and the lunsey-woolseys for their curtains, and wait patiently while they turned them over and slowly made their choice. He polished up every pane in the two bow-fronted windows of the little shop, so that the silks and flannels and calamancoes he had arranged with care might be seen to the best advantage. On rare and important occasions, Lady Cotswold herself would

stop at the door in her coach, and then Brown would come out and bow low, and ask her ladyship what he could show her. But it was John the apprentice who ran backwards and forwards with printed linens and the most expensive Mantua silks, till her ladyship had made her choice. She was so well satisfied with her purchases, and the civility of the new apprentice, that she gave a special order that the next consignment of plum-coloured cloth for her servants' liveries should be obtained through Brown's.

The part of the business that John's cousin liked best was an occasional visit to London. He went up wearing a sword and wig, and returned with stories of the gay company he had kept. He would not allow his wife to learn the business, or to help in the shop; he liked her to "act as a gentlewoman." This, he thought, would be achieved if she did not "stoop to the business," but sat elegantly in her parlour, received visits from her neighbours, and entertained them with tea.¹ He liked her to go out in the fine coach he had bought for her, so that his prosperity could be seen and admired by the neighbours. Sometimes she would find this life tedious, and say that she would like to learn the business in case her husband should die first. This only made him very angry.

This love of display seemed very strange to young John Brown. He had been carefully reared in an atmosphere of simplicity and hard work. In these things his grandparents had firmly believed. He had never been allowed to join in the hunting and hawking that many Wootton tradespeople enjoyed. Now, when his cousin thus enjoyed himself, he was expected to stay at home and look after the business. He spent his spare time, when he had any, in reading improving books. Not books of religion, though he had many which he never opened, that had been passed down to him from his grandfather. He preferred books that would help him with his work. He was determined to become a rich man. While Mistress Sarah was beguiling the dullness of gentility by reading the new romance of *Robinson Crusoe*, the apprentice pored over *The Complete English Tradesman*, published in 1725 by the same author, DANIEL DEFOE. DEFOE had had actual

¹ This idea of "gentility" was copied from such as Katherine Corbet, not from knights' ladies of the early seventeenth century.

experience of business, and had much sound advice to give John read with care the model letters for men of business to write to merchants and customers, and was, after a time, entrusted with the business letters of the firm.

When his apprentice days were over he was taken into the business, for the cousin feared his rivalry if he set up for himself in the same town.

When at last his cousin died, the business was his. He did not intend to remain a draper all his life, and thought he saw opportunities of using his knowledge of stuffs to become a clothier. He intended to get on, and as he never spent money on fine clothes or amusements, was content to live very simply, and determined to marry none but a wealthy wife, he had money to spare to extend his business.

He despised other merchants who did not think as he thought, particularly the head of the London firm of Midwinter, whom he noticed on his first visit to the capital kept liveried servants as if he was a lord, and who was not to be found at his warehouse in the middle of the morning at a busy time of year. When he inquired what important business had called Midwinter away, he was told he had "gone a-fishing in Hackney marsh." The idle fellow had, in fact, trudged off at daybreak, with bread and cheese and a copy of Walton's *Compleat Angler* in his pocket. As he walked he hummed this song (which he had learnt from Walton), which would have outraged Brown still further —

"Life is but vain,
For 'tis subject to pain,
And sorrow and short as a bubble,
'Tis a hodge-podge of business, and money and care,
And care and money and trouble

But we'll take no care
When the weather proves fair,
Nor will we vex now though it rain,
We'll banish all sorrow and sing till to-morrow,
And angle, and angle again."

As it was, Brown withdrew the order from Midwinter's (it was worth fully £50 a year), and gave it to a graver citizen. Mid-

winter never deserved the nickname of "Prosperity" which the people of Wootton applied to John Brown.

It had not been in the nature of earlier Browns to take anything for granted. They had distinguished themselves in the seventeenth century by their determination to be free to worship as they chose, and they would not accept the authority of the Church, or the interference of the Government.

John Brown had never known a time when he could not go to meeting unhindered, and indeed he went every Sunday to the meeting-house built in 1689. The only interference he had ever known was in matters of business, that annoying occasion, for example, when Parliament had been so misguided as to attempt to regulate the rates he thought fit to pay the weavers for the cloth they had woven, and he was never tired of pointing out that the business of the Government was to "let alone." The less business men were interfered with, the better for the trade and prosperity of the whole country.¹

Another kind of interference in his business came from the workers in the other branches of the clothing industry. He had worked up his own way from draper's apprentice to clothier, and he was enterprising enough to want to inquire into every detail of his new business, and see whether accepted methods could be improved. This was not at all popular in Wootton, for every one knows that any change may cause loss of employment, and few men care to take risks with their weekly earnings. For a long time Brown had known about the "flying shuttle" on KAY's patent loom, before the strike of the weavers had given him an excuse for introducing it.

It was not till long after the excitement of the riot described in the last chapter had died down that it had been possible to reintroduce the hated looms. Gradually, however, they had been accepted by the weavers, who came at last to own at least one of the new improved pattern. This enabled them to work more quickly, and the shortage of yarn became serious. The cottage spinners could not supply it fast enough, and experiments were made to see if a new spinning-wheel could be made, which worked more rapidly.

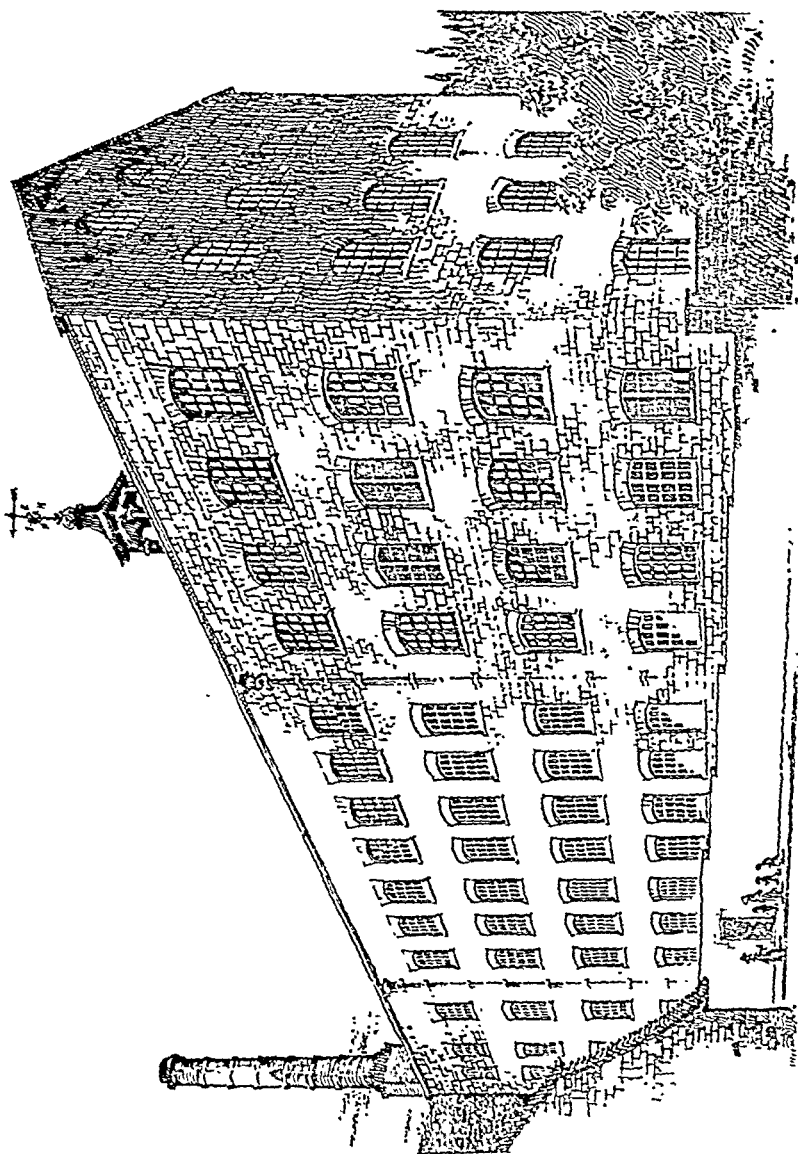
It was not till "Prosperity" Brown was beginning to grow old

¹ This idea came to be known as *Laissez-faire*.

and had taken his son Reuben into the business that the spinning problem was solved by a man named HARGREAVES. After many experiments, he produced a wonderful loom which could actually spin several threads at once. No cottager could have afforded to buy one of these, but "Prosperity Brown" could, and did. Even as an old man he would lose no opportunity of improving his business. He bought a large number of "spinning jennies," and buildings were put up where they could be worked. In these new spinning-sheds he employed women and children, it was not hard to learn to manage the jennies, and unskilled labour was not expensive. The profits were enormous, and the outlay on the new machines was soon repaid with interest. The weavers were thoroughly pleased, because they could get all the yarn they needed without spending whole days tramping out to country villages, and get it at a cheaper rate. There was no machine breaking on this occasion. It was a serious loss, however, to the village people, and some of them began to leave their homes, and come into Wootton-on-the-Fosse to live, where they could get work. The factory system had begun.

One great advantage of the new sheds, in the eyes of the parish officers, whose business it was, among other things, to look after homeless children, was that it provided work that even feeble and stupid children could do. Large numbers of pauper children were "apprenticed" to Brown and worked in his spinning-sheds for twelve hours a day and more. It was considered excellent that these children should have such an opportunity of doing honest work, and should be apprenticed to a trade like the children of "respectable citizens." No one bothered to reflect that work in the spinning-sheds was not really an apprenticeship, for managing jennies was not a trade, and the children were not in a way to become masters at the end of seven years. Certainly "Prosperity" Brown, though not unkindly by nature, never thought about them at all, except as a part of his machinery. He had never thought of much except his business, and what happened to the children when they were not in his employment was quite outside the range of his interests.

When "Prosperity" Brown thought, the subject was how he could keep his business up-to-date, and compete with the Lancashire cottons and Yorkshire woollens that were flooding the



BROWN'S FACTORY IN WOOTTON-ON-THE-FOSSE

market with new and popular goods, and threatening the supremacy of west country materials. A time came when he retired to bed, said he would speak to no one, and that his food was to be left at the door. His son Reuben knew that this meant changes in the business, for his father always went to bed when he wanted to think.

When he emerged at last, he had made up his mind to install water-power in his mills. This was far more revolutionary than anything that had ever been done before in Wootton. It would mean new buildings, as well as entirely new and but recently invented machinery.¹ Brown had worked out the cost in his head as he lay on his back and stared at the ceiling, and decided that it would pay him in the end.

The people of Wootton-on-the-Fosse were much disturbed at the news. It seemed unnatural to spin without the power of human beings, and they feared, besides, that it would mean unemployment. It was necessary to guard the arrival of the machinery and the building of the water-mill with soldiers. On such occasions the independent business man appreciated the power of the Government.

"Prosperity" Brown died before the water-mills were completed, but Reuben carried on the business with as much energy and foresight as his father could have done. Sometimes he regretted that business was not the steady-going affair that it had once been, but a race for the newest methods, when to fall behind meant to fail. His father once showed him a battered copy of the *Complete English Tradesman*, which, he said, had been his best schoolmaster. It was much less than a hundred years old, and yet it was utterly old-fashioned, and little use to Reuben, for DUFFIE had written it before the invention of the new machines had revolutionized industrial methods, and before water-power to spin yarn had ever been thought of. Reuben wondered how long the new machines would be considered efficient, and what changes there were still to come.

¹ Including a spinning machine called a "mule," invented by CROMPTON, about 1779.

CHAPTER XVII

DR JOHNSON'S LONDON

"The town is my element ; there are my friends, there are my books . . . and there are my amusements. . . ."

"If (said he) I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman."

(DR. JOHNSON, 1784 and 1777.)

" . . . Good breeding, you know, does not consist in low bows and formal ceremony ; but in easy, civil, and respectful behaviour. . . . Answer with complaisance when you are spoken to . . . (remember) to drink first to the lady of the house, and next to the master ; not to eat awkwardly or dirtily ; not to sit when others stand : and to do all with an air of complaisance, and not with a grave, sour look. . . . I do not mean a silly insipid smile, that fools have when they would be civil. . . ."

" . . . I hardly know anything so difficult to obtain, or so necessary to possess, as perfect good breeding : which is equally inconsistent with a still formality, an impertinent forwardness, and an awkward bashfulness."

(LORD CHESTERFIELD, *Letters to his Son*, 1742.)

At Wootton Abbas, on a certain fine morning in 1773, great preparations were being made for an important journey. Anthony Corbet, grandson of "Farmer George," second Earl of Cotswold, was returning to London for the new session of Parliament, of which he was a member. For the first time, his younger brother, Richard, was to accompany him. Richard was just seventeen, and he had hitherto been educated at Wootton Place, where his father's chaplain, an excellent classical scholar, acted as tutor. Robert Corbet, his father, felt that Richard had now reached the age when he should have a wider experience of life ; for he held that whereas "mere learning without good breeding is pedantry," good breeding gives charm and grace to learning. He did not want his son, through living too much in the country, to be a "rustic booby." He was fond of telling him that "to be ill-bred and rude is intolerable, and the way to be kicked out of company" ; even bashfulness he held was ungainly and ridiculous.

To secure that the boy should be at his ease in company, he determined to send him to London, and from there to Paris,

and indeed to give him the opportunity of travelling over Europe where he might meet men of distinction, on whose behaviour he might model his own. He himself had travelled in Europe, before the serious hunting accident which had made him an invalid, and he had many friends in England and in France who would welcome his son. That his son should have experience of French manners, and learn to appreciate French good breeding, Robert Corbet was particularly anxious. He had once given it as his opinion that a French cook had more instinctive feeling towards good manners than an English lord. Many Englishmen, he said, were too proud to learn from foreigners, and too stiff and awkward to bring themselves to speak in a graceful manner, such as he wished to become natural to his son.

He had already given similar opportunities to his son Anthony, of whom he was extremely proud. He was, however, somewhat disturbed by his extravagance, and hoped that he would not take after his uncle, Joshua Corbet, whom he certainly resembled in appearance. (Nearly twenty years earlier, Joshua had been obliged to leave England, after leading a wild life in London, and spending large sums of his father's money on cards and wine and gaiety. He was seldom mentioned in the Corbet family, but was believed to be having a successful career in the East India Company.)

Richard greatly admired his elder brother, and it was a great moment for him when four spirited horses brought the chaise to the door. When Anthony was ready, they sped down the drive, and turned out of the iron gates into the London road, at the magnificent speed of ten miles an hour.

Cottagers came running out to clutch their children and to see the "Quality" pass by. The smart travelling post-chaise (built by HATCHET'S of Long Acre), was much admired. It had been newly painted, plum colour, with yellow wheels, the postillions and groom wore Lord Cotswold's plum-coloured livery, and his coat-of-arms was emblazoned on the panels.

They bowled along for some miles very smoothly, for the Turnpike was owned by Lord Cotswold and was in excellent repair. The ruts in other stretches of road were so deep that Anthony (when he had been flung against Richard for the third time in five minutes), said he would have his next conveyance

measured to fit them, since there seemed but little chance of ever improving the surface. A groom rode beside the carriage and paid the tolls to the gate-keepers, so that no time was wasted. When the posting inn at last was reached, a boy had already given warning of their coming, and horses were ready to take them on to the next stage, where Richard hoped they would rest and eat. It was pleasant to feel as they drove along that they were the fastest equipage on the road, for the postillions saw to it that neither stage-coach nor chaise passed them. Even Anthony, who loved speed, had to order them to check on a steep hill, when the chaise seemed in imminent danger of turning over.

They were fortunate in having no accidents; they did not stick in the mud, lose the road, or fall into a ditch; though they passed a less fortunate coach whose driver had been thrown off into a chalk-pit and killed, and the passengers were being rescued with difficulty from beneath the wreckage.

Anthony had hoped to make Maidenhead on the third night, but at the previous stage the landlord of the inn told them that the Thicket was too dangerous to drive through after dark, and that if he had money or valuables with him he would be well advised to wait till daylight. Richard was all for going on, and said that the landlord was frightening them in order to make them book rooms with him; both brothers, the groom, and the postillions were armed. Anthony ascertained that the inn was an extremely comfortable one, and that he had acquaintances there, with whom he could enjoy wine from the excellent cellars the place boasted; and so, to Richard's great disappointment, he gave orders that he would not need fresh horses till eight o'clock the following morning. At Maidenhead next day they heard that three coaches had been held up the previous night and successfully robbed, and that the highwaymen had ridden safely away. Richard would have liked to have helped prevent that, and he studied his road-map (as well as he could for the jolting of the chaise), to see if there was any more desolate or wooded country between Maidenhead and London.

The map he used was in one of the road-books which were then becoming increasingly popular. These consisted of maps, which merely showed the roads and the country immediately adjoining them. (This style of map had been invented nearly



one hundred years previously by John Ogilby, who had published in 1675 a handsome volume of these maps, which Richard had often looked at in his father's library.) Richard's road-book was a smaller work, more suitable for use on a journey, which had appeared in 1764, and was called *Britannia Depicta, or Ogilby Improved*.

As they drew near London, Anthony pointed out Lord Holland's house, just visible among the woods of Kensington, and by the time they reached Hyde Park Corner they felt they were in London. It took a long time still to rattle their way down Piccadilly, through fashionable Soho to Corbet House, in Queen Square, on the northernmost edge of the town. Richard was amazed at the size of London, and it was said to be still growing, constantly swallowing up fresh villages. He could see from his map that the city of London was only a part of the whole vast extent, that stretched along the bank of the Thames. From Blackwall to Hyde Park, from Islington to Lambeth, was virtually one immense city. Anthony recognized many friends as they drove through the streets, and seemed glad to be back again from what he described as the exile of the country. Richard observed that the cut of his own clothes did not seem at all fashionable, and determined that his first visit should be to the tailor.

Within a few days he had ordered and received three new suits, in the new and sober colourings dictated by Anthony: a dark green with gold binding, a brown similarly bound, and a plain blue. He then began to enjoy himself. There was a much talked of, and very successful new play, by OLIVER GOLDSMITH, *She Stoops to Conquer*, to which he went with Anthony. He hoped he appeared less of a boor than Tony Lumpkin, though he was so new to London. He also went in a riotous party, to a revival of *The Beggar's Opera*, which his grandfather had seen when the play was new. Richard remembered hearing his father say it was a thoroughly bad play for young men, since it made highway robbery appear a desirable occupation and an easy way to wealth. He had added that DR JOHNSON in his life of JOHN GAY, the author, had endorsed this opinion. After theatres, Anthony would sometimes visit Vauxhall Gardens, or invite friends to his house where they would play cards till it was daylight.

Since the hunting accident which had made him an invalid

his father's library was Robert Corbet's greatest interest, and Richard had been given several commissions to carry out for his father. He was to visit the well-known bookshop of the brothers DILLY in the Poultry, to purchase for the library of Wootton a copy of MR BOSWELL's account of Corsica. He was also to buy several works recently published by MR STRAHAN in New Street, which his father was anxious to add to his collection. These included MACKENZIE'S *Man of Feeling* and BLACKSTONE'S *Commentaries*. He was disappointed to find that no account of CAPTAIN COOK's famous circumnavigation of the world was yet forthcoming.

It was at the house of MR STRAHAN that Richard saw for the first time the famous DR JOHNSON. He recognized him from an impersonation that DAVID GARRICK, the actor, who was a friend of Anthony's, had given for his benefit. He almost expected to hear him say, as GARRICK had made him do, "Davy has some convivial pleasantry about him, but 'tis a futile fellow," for the talk turned on no other than "DAVY." GARRICK himself GARRICK had said of him, Richard remembered. "DR JOHNSON will shake the laughter out of you", and sure enough, he saw the grave printer rock with laughter, and Dr JOHNSON himself indulge his own huge roar, and roll from side to side. Richard was amazed, for he had always been taught that to laugh immoderately was most undignified, and not at all genteel. He also noticed that the clothes of the learned man were rusty with age and as carelessly put on as those of his own grandfather, "Farmer George."

When Anthony was in the House Richard amused himself by buying himself a cutter, and sailing in Chelsea reach, or by riding in the park, or by making expeditions to friends in the country round London. He would often ride to Richmond or to Twickenham. He also amused himself by watching two executions at Tyburn—a highwayman and a forger—both of whom met their death with dignity, and even with cheerfulness. Bedlam, too, was then open to the public, and he did not fail to take an opportunity of viewing the unhappy lunatics.

One of his visits to Twickenham had been to see HORACE WALPOLE, the author of the Gothic romance, *The Castle of Otranto*, at his wonderful house, Strawberry Hill. He was

very curious to see the house itself, which was said to be strange and romantic, and truly Gothic; and also the private printing press there from which his father, a friend of WALPOLE's, had several much-prized books. WALPOLE gave Richard a copy of the *Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, and told him to convey it to his father when he returned to Wootton, and he many times expressed his regret that Robert Corbet's health prevented him from coming to visit Strawberry Hill.

One day Anthony had decided on an evening with some of the wildest of his friends, and wished to be rid of Richard. To his great relief, he was able to prevail on GARRICK to take his brother to dine in the company of no less exciting people than SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, DR JOHNSON, and OLIVER GOLDSMITH, and several of their friends with whom they were to spend an evening.

Richard had seen DR JOHNSON several times since his first encounter at MR STRAHAN's, twice at the Mitre Tavern, drinking coffee in the company of MR BOSWELL, and once driving in MR STRAHAN's coach. He hoped that if he was privileged to dine at the same table, he might have the good fortune to hear him make one of those trenchant remarks for which he was famous, and which, it was said, MR BOSWELL was collecting and meant to make into a book one day. He expected that GOLDSMITH, too, would be a brilliant talker judging by the play, but GARRICK said that he would only like to be. He repeated, in JOHNSON's manner, a remark he had heard made about the poet. "GOLDY writes like an angel, and talks like Poll Parrot." "JOHNSON," he added, "will call him GOLDY, though he knows he thinks it an insult, and GOLDSMITH is so jealous that I have known him seize his hat and rush from the room, to hide his mortification, when JOHNSON has outshone him in argument."

After this Richard wondered what GOLDSMITH's fate would be that evening, and was quite glad to see him launched into a vivacious discourse. But just in the middle of it, DR JOHNSON was observed to be rolling himself, as was his habit when he wished to speak. Immediately a German who was sitting next to GOLDSMITH interrupted, exclaiming, "Stay, stay, Tochter Shonson is going to say something." Richard lost what DR JOHNSON did say in his interest in the rage and mortification of the silenced poet. During the evening Richard gathered something of JOHNSON's

respect for law and order, his veneration for established institutions, and his strong feeling that women should be modest, delicate, submissive. It surprised him, having heard how JOHNSON had proudly made his own way in the world, and had, without the help of any patron, made and published his great dictionary, and that he had independently dedicated it to the booksellers of London, to listen to him now defending hard and fast lines of class distinction. 'Sir,' he heard him say, "it is our duty to maintain the subordination of civilized society"; and in this connection Richard understood that it was clearly the public duty of a man of rank whose daughter had "made a mean marriage" to treat her with "an inflexible steadiness of displeasure."

Women should certainly submit meekly to paternal authority, and further, as Richard fully agreed, it was most improper of a woman to sing in public, and (in spite of MADAME LE BRUN) for a woman to turn portrait painter and "stare in men's faces" was "very indelicate in a female."

Afterwards, Richard had good reason to remember the discussion about duelling, though at the time its justification seemed self-evident. He himself had never had a doubt but that a man must defend his honour. He had not thought that anyone would need to try and reconcile the practice with the Christian religion, nor that anyone would ever question the necessity of war, so he was not specially interested to hear JOHNSON declare that duels were "more justifiable than a war in which thousands go forth, without any cause of personal quarrel, and massacre each other."

Richard drove home afterwards in a hackney carriage, and at the door of the house in Queen Square narrowly escaped a collision with another carriage which was proceeding in the most irregular fashion along the street. He got out and paid his fare, and saw that the strange behaviour of the other carriage was due to a violent quarrel in progress between the coachman and one of the several young men that occupied it. Driver and passenger prodded each other with sword-hilt and whip-handle, and at last the excited fare climbed on to the box, and the two men crashed to the ground. Richard watched them pick themselves up, and then saw, to his astonishment, that the angry coachman was disentangling himself from his brother Anthony, and that Anthony

was more than a little drunk. The night watch arrived at this moment, and Richard thought it prudent to coax his brother to comply with their demand that he should go to the watch-house, and when there, should pay the fine demanded. The watch were not surprised, for such incidents were of nightly occurrence.

Some nights later, Anthony took Richard with him, first to a theatre, where he saw his guide of another evening, DAVID GARRICK, act; and afterwards with Anthony's friends, to spend the evening at cards. They were playing faro, and Anthony enjoyed a remarkable run of luck, winning his stake time after time.

The wine, the hot room and the high stakes combined to produce an atmosphere of tense excitement. Richard looked on with anxiety, for he saw that Charles Willoughby, one of the players, was losing his temper faster even than his fortune. Both the young men were as excited as they were reckless, and when Willoughby declared that such cards as Anthony held were never dealt him by fortune, Anthony leapt to his feet, hotly repudiating the insinuation and making unsteady lunges with his drawn sword. If Richard and the more sober of his companions had not restrained him, Anthony would have run Willoughby through the body then and there.

The matter could only end in one way, and Richard was not surprised to hear his brother challenge Willoughby to a duel. Richard at once offered himself as his brother's second, but Anthony's friends thought him too young, and an older and more experienced man was chosen in his stead. Willoughby, as the challenged, had the right to name the weapon; and he chose to fight with pistols.

Richard noticed that Anthony's friends looked gloomy, and the second told him that Willoughby was a noted shot. He was known to have killed three men in duels, so there was little hope that he would fire his weapon in the air. This was sometimes done to satisfy honour when neither of the opponents really wished to kill the other. The seconds met to discuss time and place, and Hyde Park at daybreak the following morning was chosen for the meeting.

The brothers returned home. Anthony was sober enough now, and he spent the rest of the night cleaning his pistols and writing a few letters. Just before dawn he set out for Hyde

Park, Richard accompanying him in silence. Anthony's second was already there, and Charles Willoughby and two friends could be seen approaching. The seconds had measured the ground and examined the pistols. In silence each duellist picked up his weapon and in silence strode to his appointed place, then turned and waited for the signal to fire.

Richard suddenly realized that his brother was in deadly peril, and for a moment turned away his head. Two reports sounded



THE DUEL.

simultaneously, and as the smoke cleared away Richard saw both men stretched on the ground. Willoughby was only stunned; the bullet had grazed his head, and he soon recovered and was able to make his way home.

Anthony was clearly very badly hurt, and Richard had some difficulty in getting him back to his lodging. He never spoke again, and a few hours later he died. Richard was left to post home with the news, and to console his father as best he might. He could at least declare that Anthony had behaved irreproachably, and had met his death like a gentleman.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DECORATION OF A LONDON HOUSE IN 1780

"Indostan . . . the country of the Great Mogul : . . . produces great quantities of silks and cottons : we trade with it very much, and our East India Company has a great settlement at Fort St. George. . . . We carry on a great trade with China . . . from whence we bring all our tea and china. . . ."

(LORD CHESTERFIELD, *Letters to his Son*, 1742.)

FROM the day of his brother's death Richard Corbet considered himself a man. By 1780 he had become a Member of Parliament, belonged to Brooks's, the great Whig Club, of which CHARLES JAMES FOX and EDMUND BURKE were members, and could consider both as his friends. CHARLES JAMES FOX he held to be the greatest of statesmen as well as the best of companions. It would at this time have been hard to say which was the greater, FOX's dislike for KING GEORGE III as King, or KING GEORGE's detestation of FOX as a member of the Government. Richard fully shared FOX's opinions and his conviction that KING GEORGE and the Tories were a danger to the liberties of England.

Could the grave and learned soldier, Sir Francis Corbet, who had been dead for a hundred years, have seen his descendant, he might have disapproved strongly of the gay life he led in London ; but he must have rejoiced to know that the parliamentary traditions of his family were being maintained. He would have been well pleased to hear Richard support with skill and vigour and several Latin quotations, the motion before the House of Commons that "the power of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished." It was a subject after his own heart.

In 1780, politics were not Richard's first interest. He was shortly to be married, and was anxious to make Corbet House look its best for his bride. In his eyes it wore an old-fashioned and shabby air, for it had been built in the reign of QUEEN ANNE, and nearly all the furniture belonged to that period. He was

making a tour of inspection one day, considering carefully how he should improve his house, when he heard the sound of wheels. Looking out through the small oblong panes of one of the upper windows, he saw a coach stop at his own door. An old man with a very yellow face stepped out, whom Richard did not recognize at all. He went down to welcome his guest, and found he was no other than his father's brother, Joshua Corbet. His wild youth was now forgotten, he had returned from India a wealthy and childless old man. He had heard that Richard was living at Corbet House, and determined to visit him before he made the journey to Wootton.

He seemed Richard thought rather a fierce old man, with a choleric blue eye but he regarded Richard with approval, and greeted him in the most friendly manner.

Richard ushered in his guest, and ordered sherry and biscuits. Over these the old man scrutinized his nephew, and asked him innumerable questions. He did not know that his brother Robert was dead, and was rejoiced to hear that his father, Lord Cotswold, was still alive, and though nearly eighty, still able to take an interest in his estate. He looked with sympathy and interest at SIR JOSHUA REYNOLD'S portrait of Anthony, whom he remembered as a boy at Eton.

While they are drinking their wine we may as well take the opportunity of looking carefully at their picture. They are both wearing powdered wigs, as had been the mode then for nearly a century, though Richard's children will look upon them as old-fashioned. It is curious that they had remained popular for so long, for they must have been hot and uncomfortable. Some people powdered their own hair, which was cooler, but that had disadvantages too, because a wig could at least be sent to the barber's to be dressed, whereas a man would have to go himself and sit there while his own hair was powdered and tied. So, many people shaved their heads as Richard has done, and wore a night-cap to keep their pates warm when they went to bed.

Uncle Joshua's clothes are less stylishly cut than Richard's, for he did not care about new-fangled ways. This did not matter (for it was not necessary for everybody to dress exactly alike), so Uncle Joshua is wearing a full-skirted coat to his knees, with a waistcoat underneath. The fashionable Richard has a

coat with cut-away tails, the remote ancestor of the tail-coat men still wear as part of their evening dress. He has a short waistcoat, which, again, is not so very different from a modern one. His tight-fitting knee-breeches (made of buckskin), are not so modern, and, as he lived in the eighteenth century, he naturally wore



UNCLE JOSHUA AND RICHARD CORBET DRINK SHERRY

gay colours, not the sober browns and greys and black which men choose now.

Both Richard and Uncle Joshua wear fine linen shirts (probably Irish linen) which show frilled cuffs. Uncle Joshua is a very particular person, and Richard, too, is fastidious, so these cuffs are fresh and white. Dirty, slovenly people sometimes allowed them to get quite grubby and covered with snuff as well.

The chairs they are sitting on, and the table between them

have a history of their own. Unlike the furniture of the rest of the house, these do not belong to the reign of QUEEN ANNE. They are made of mahogany, and their wide seats and elaborate design and carving show that they belong to the middle of the century. They are in the style of CHIPPENDALE, the great cabinet-maker and may even have been designed by CHIPPENDALE himself.

Richard's grandfather, George Corbet, in one of his rare visits to town, had jokingly staked his chairs, in a wager with the friends who sat on them, that ROBERT WALPOLE would not let England go to war with Spain in 1739. Unluckily for him, the people of England made such a commotion that the great minister (who had kept the country at peace for nearly twenty years) was obliged to declare war. George Corbet's friends roared with laughter, and sent their footmen round to fetch the chairs. Then of course, he had to buy new ones, and here they are. He must have betted away a table too, for the "claw and ball" carved table, between Richard and Uncle Joshua, is of the same date as the chairs. On it may be seen the sherry glasses, and Uncle Joshua's box of snuff.

When they had finished their sherry, Richard offered to show his uncle the house, which the old man had not seen since the days before he went to India. Uncle Joshua pointed suddenly to a black lacquer cabinet, with Chinese designs on it in gold. It was an English copy of Eastern work, and Richard's grandfather, who, like other people of his time, greatly admired such things, had bought it. "I remember that as a boy," he said, "You would never have seen that kind of thing in England if it hadn't been for the East India Company. Our trade has brought Chinese silks and lacquers and porcelain into the country, a great deal more could come in if the Government allowed it. We have muslins and cottons, too, that you can't buy in this country, because the Government is too much afraid of throwing English spinners and weavers out of work by flooding their market with foreign goods."

Richard had always liked the strange ornate cabinet, and wished he had more such treasures. He said as much to Uncle Joshua, who seemed pleased at his nephew's love of "chinoiserie," and assumed a mysterious air. "If you like imitations, what would you say to the real thing?" he asked. Richard replied that he

would think himself most fortunate to possess real Chinese work, but that genuine Chinese furniture and ornaments were highly prized and very hard to obtain. Uncle Joshua chuckled, and then quite suddenly took his leave. Almost as suddenly Richard found he had come back, but not alone this time. Lackeys were arriving staggering under heavy crates. Mrs. Kitty, the housekeeper, came hurrying out to see what could be happening, and began to think the place would never be straight again.

The astonished Richard now saw present after present unrolled before his eyes. Beautiful rugs from Persia and India, rolls of silk from China, and tall, blue Chinese vases. A whole dinner-service too, of Chinese porcelain, such as Richard had never seen before. The design we should call "willow pattern," which was unknown in England before this time. His own dinner-service was of silver, and at Wootton Place gold plate was used on state occasions. Uncle Joshua assured his nephew that once he was accustomed to eating from a porcelain plate, he would never care for gold or silver again.

The arrangements of Mrs. Kitty, the housekeeper, for five o'clock dinner were sadly put about by all the excitement, so Uncle Joshua carried Richard off to dine with him, leaving Mrs. Kitty to find safe places for the porcelain, the Chinese idols, the ivory chessmen, the rugs, and the silk hangings with which Uncle Joshua's generosity had strewn the hall.

Richard tasted chutney and curry for the first time, and burnt his mouth. Uncle Joshua showed him his bathroom, which many Anglo-Indians affected, and Richard was more surprised to hear that his uncle had a daily bath than he had been at the heat of the curry. He considered fitting up a bath room in Corbet House, and wondered what conservative Mrs. Kitty would say at having to heat and carry upstairs such a quantity of water. He doubted if the water-supply of the house would prove sufficient.

Richard listened till midnight to strange stories of the company. Uncle Joshua had known CLIVE, and had fought the French; and had been in India when the business of the company was only to trade, and not to govern as well. It seemed likely in 1780 that England was about to lose her American colonies and newly-conquered Canada too, hence it was consoling to Richard to

consider the opinion strongly held by Joshua Corbet, that a new and fully as important an Empire was growing up in India

The day following Uncle Joshua's visit, Richard drove down to Robert Street, Adelphi, off the Strand, to call on the most fashionable architect of the day, ROBERT ADAM. He had often visited the new group of streets there to see his friend, DAVID GARRICK, who knew the ADAM brothers well (he sometimes amused himself in their company by playing a Scotch game called golf, which they tried to teach him). GARRICK was a great admirer of their work, which claimed to be classical in the truest and purest sense of the word, and Richard himself would have liked a house planned and decorated throughout in the new style. This being too expensive an undertaking, he had determined on redecorating two rooms for the special use of his bride.

He looked with approval at the Adelphi houses as he made his way to Robert Street. He remembered the site well as a boy, before the ADAM brothers had bought it, shored up the steep slope with brickwork, and built there. Then it had been nothing but a precipitous slope of evil-smelling mud, on which a few hovels were precariously perched, they had always seemed in imminent danger of slipping into the Thames, for there was no embankment in those days.

In the office in Robert Street (which latter the senior partner had named after himself), Richard glanced approvingly at the delicate moulding of the plaster ceiling above his head, and thought that it was far more beautiful than the elaborate plaster-work at Wootton Place. Conceited and pretentious the Scotsmen might be, as every one said, but he liked their work and meant to have some of it in Corbet House.

ROBERT ADAM visited the house, and a large room on the ground floor was chosen for a music-room, and a smaller one upstairs for a boudoir, for it was thought that these would be most acceptable to a "lady of fashion." A boudoir might be what we should call a large drawing-room, or, as in this case, a specially cosy little room, to serve both as dressing-room and for the reception of specially intimate friends. The old furniture of the time of QUEEN ANNE was cleared away, for the curved backs and bowed legs of the chairs did not seem at all in keeping with modern taste. The very candlesticks had to harmonize with the

decorative scheme of the new room, and a carpet had to be ordered in which the pattern would "reflect" the design of the new ceiling. The old things were stored in the attics, relegated to the servant's hall, or sent down to Wootton. Here they were seen by Tucker, the skilful carpenter in Wootton Courcy, when he was doing some work for Lord Cotswold. He was filled with admiration for them; he had never seen furniture in that style before. He asked to be allowed to copy them, which he did in oak and elm, and sold them to Jonathan Corbet after the fire at Wootton Manor Farm, for his new house.

Mrs. Kitty was very cross for many weeks, while ADAM's Scottish and Italian workmen were in the house, stripping old plaster and panelling from the walls, and putting in new.

Meanwhile, in the city of Bath, Lady Betty, for whom all this disorder was being caused, was herself very busy making ready for her wedding. Richard came to see her when he could, and told her about Uncle Joshua, and the progress of the new work.

CHAPTER XIX

A LADY OF FASHION IN 1780

"I have just had my hair dressed. You can't think how oddly my head feels, full of powder and black pins and a great cushion on top of it. My face looks quite different to what it did before my hair was dressed. When I shall be able to make use of a comb for myself I cannot tell, for my hair is so much entangled."

*Your dutiful and affectionate though unpolished
Evelina*

(From *Evelina*, by FANNY BURNBY, 1778)

IN 1780, Lady Betty was seventeen, "her manners just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl, her person pleasing, and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is." She had been out of the school-room for two years, and had been recently brought to Bath, where she might see something of the world before she went to London as Richard Corbet's wife.

Lady Betty was very happy in Bath. There was so much to see in the gay shops, displaying the very latest fashions in gowns and ribbons and muslins. There were dances, and the daily visits to the pump room, where fashionable people drank the waters. There were the baths themselves, by no means confined to invalids, and an excellent theatre too. The not very remote time when she had stitched her sampler under her mother's strict eye, and written copy books, and reluctantly studied French and music and deportment, seemed delightfully far away amidst the excitements of Bath.

Bath in those days was as busy and as fashionable as a capital city. The surface of the roads had improved wonderfully during the second half of the century, and people could drive to Bath without discomfort. Lady Betty's father and mother had brought her in their own coach, and actually without a single accident during the whole journey.

When Richard was able to be in Wootton, it was not a long

journey to Bath, and when he came to stay there were expeditions to Clifton and to Blaize Castle. He drove her in his own curricule, at great speed, so that her aunt, who had always to accompany her in another conveyance, was sometimes anxious lest she should be left behind altogether. Betty was not supposed to read novels, which were considered frivolous waste of time for a young lady, but she had managed, notwithstanding, to read *The Castle of Otranto*, which had greatly stimulated her romantic interest in Blaize Castle. In it she hoped to find secret stairways and hidden mysteries, and she was proportionately disappointed. Richard promised to take her, when she came to London, to see the "Gothic Castle" at Strawberry Hill, belonging to the author of *Otranto*, which, he assured her, was full of ancient treasures, and as turreted and ornate as she could wish.

Knowing her partiality for novels, he had brought her a new one called *Evelina*, and in it Lady Betty was able to taste in advance the enjoyments of London. She felt a great deal older and wiser than *Evelina*, for she had spent two seasons in Bath itself (it was no novelty to her to have her hair powdered), but it was exciting to read about the dances *Evelina* went to, and the opera, and her dangerous adventures in Vauxhall Gardens.

Evelina had to be read secretly by candle-light, for by day the preparation of her wedding finery demanded all her time. Dresses of silk and muslin and brocade had to be made ready, and when at last she came to London she had quite as many as any woman could want.

Nothing could have given her greater pleasure than the rooms that had been made ready for her. She knew that her boudoir would be the envy of all her friends. The walls had been hung with silk hangings of Chinese design, instead of being panelled in wood and painted, as in the new music-room. London was less smoky then than now, so silk hangings were less unpractical than they would be to-day; and they set off Uncle Joshua's Chinese gifts to perfection, and gave exactly the right air of "chinoiserie" to the room. Richard's only regret was that his friend GARRICK had never seen his Chinese treasures, since he would have so much appreciated them.¹

¹ Garrick's furniture, designed and painted in Chinese style, may be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He died in 1779.

Lady Betty was delighted with the printed Indian cotton which had been used for the fringed, looped-back curtains, and with the "Adam" ceiling, but the dressing-table seemed to her the most wonderful thing in the room. She sat down on the low seat and admired her reflection in the mirror. Then she opened all the drawers intended for the boxes of powder and rouge, the heavily scented pomades for her powdered coiffeur, and the preparations of rose-mary, elder, and witch-hazel for her complexion.



THE CHAIR FOR A MUSIC ROOM

A washing cabinet that had a folding top to hide away basin and soap-dish stood in a corner, made of mahogany with a narrow band of paler satinwood inlay. A semi-circular table, in marquetry with a glass behind it, stood against a wall, and with some chairs and a settee the little room seemed to Lady Betty to lack nothing. Richard told her that the furniture had been designed by THOMAS SHERATON, whose simple and graceful designs were most suitable for an "Adam" room.

SHERATON had also designed a set of chairs with harp-shaped backs, specially appropriate for the music-room.

They had many wedding presents, including beautiful silver candlesticks, snuff-boxes, a teapot, a coffee-pot, a cream jug and a jug for hot water. There were also two tea caddies, each fitted with a lock, for tea at that time was eighteen shillings a pound. The urn shape of the silver coffee-set was very popular at that time, and was used not only for jugs and sugar-basins, but for the tops of bedposts, and for the knobs on fire-screens, and for the fire-screens themselves.

Uncle Joshua was most interested in the china that was given to Lady Betty. When he



A WEDGWOOD VASE IN THE SHAPE OF AN URN

had left home, china was still but little used in England, for few people were fortunate enough to have friends in the East, and when Europeans first tried to imitate fine porcelain it was a very rough affair, just earthenware covered with a glaze that easily chipped off. When at last a German discovered the precious secret of making hard porcelain, it soon became known to England, and so it was that among the presents were some little china figures, a shepherd and a shepherdess from the Chelsea potteries, a tea set from Derby, a dinner-service, and a vase designed by JOSIAH WEDGWOOD. Uncle Joshua was fond of examining the glaze and workmanship, and comparing it with his own Chinese treasures. He was fond of repeating a story he had heard of JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, that the great potter gave strict orders that only perfect specimens of his china must leave his factory. If the shape of a cup, or its colouring, fell short of perfection it must be broken up, so that no one could say that a piece of Wedgwood china was not a perfect example of the potter's craft. This pride in perfect craftsmanship makes the work of these eighteenth-century artists most precious to us to-day, so that we should be proud to possess but one of all his presents, or one piece of the furniture that he had chosen with such care.

Richard was fortunate enough to secure the services of ROMNEY, the great portrait-painter, to make a full-length picture of his wife. This was hung in the gallery in Wootton Place, and held to be the most beautiful of all the portraits of Corbet ladies.

Lady Betty insisted on seeing and doing everything that could be seen and done in London. She went to Ranelagh and walked in Kensington Gardens by day, and danced, entertained, and went to the theatre and the opera by night. She said that after London she would never enjoy even the theatre at Bath again, especially when she had seen SHERIDAN's new play acted, *The School for Scandal*, and seen the wonderful MRS SIDDONS. She had known the beautiful LINLEY sisters in Bath, and SHERIDAN, too, who had married one of them, before he had made himself famous as a dramatist. SHERIDAN came to Corbet House, where his brilliant conversation so infected the company, that they all seemed to scintillate, and the world appeared a very gay and delightful place to be in.

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF THE OPEN-FIELD VILLAGE

There are but two modes of enclosing commons. First by unanimous consent. Or secondly by Act of Parliament obtained by the petition of a certain proportion of the commoners. Whereby, a minority sanctioned only by ignorance, prejudice, or selfishness is precluded from defeating the ends of private advantage and public utility."

'Moral effects of an injurious tendency accrue to the cottager [from common rights]. The possession of a cow or two, with a hog, and a few geese, naturally exalts the peasant, in his own conception, above his brethren in the same rank of society. In sauntering after his cattle, he acquires a habit of indolence. Day-labour becomes disgusting, and at length the sale of a half-fed calf, or hog, furnishes the means of adding intemperance to idleness."

(J. BILLINGSLEY, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Somerset* in 1795)

In 1775 Joe Tucker was born in Wootton Courcy, when GEORGE III was King of England. About this time the spinning jenny had been introduced into Wootton-on-the-Fosse, with the result that the weavers no longer came to the village to buy yarn. The sight and sound of his mother spinning were among his earliest memories, and he and his brothers and sisters had had to help to card the yarn in readiness for her. Joan, his mother, had been glad to have spinning money against illness, or a bad harvest, or fire or flood, but as Joe grew older the price of spun yarn grew lower and lower. At last Joan was forced to say that she could compete no longer with the new machines in Brown's spinning-shed and her wheel lay idle in a corner.

Her husband told her not to mind, for with the help of the boys he would earn enough for both. From their few sheep was wool enough for the clothes of the family, from their cows, milk, corn and flax too, enough for their needs. No doubt more might have been done with the land if Joseph had made it a full-time business, and not worked as a carpenter as well. More scientific methods might likewise have been employed, but he was not disposed

to do anything that had not been done before. Though there was little money for fairings and pleasurings, the Tuckers had enough to bring up sturdy children in the little cottage in Roger's Row.

Joe worked with his father, and felt a man at ten. Abel was set to mind the geese on the common, and also his twin sisters. Tom looked after the pigs in the oak copse, and brought home firing. The babies stayed at home with Joan. It was a rough life, hard and busy and crowded. If Joan had been asked about her way of life, she would probably have said: "We can't complain," or "We have reason to be thankful." But in the worst years of loss or illness, if a room in the almshouses at Wootton Abbas had been offered to the old grandfather, who lived with them, she would have said (very politely): "Thank you, but we have always looked after our own." In the overwhelming troubles which came on them later, she would look back on the proud independence of her early married life as a golden age of prosperity and security. Yet while it lasted it all seemed humdrum enough, with anxious intervals when the babies were ill, or the sheep had scab, or the smut was in the corn.

The villagers of Wootton Courcy dated their troubles from the year when all John Corbet's prize cows fell ill of the moor-evil. The scraggy village herd often had diseases, it is true, but never had they all been so stricken, and never had all the village lost so much money at once. Never had John Corbet been so angry with his neighbours.

It happened in this way. John Corbet turned out a herd of twenty cows on to the moor that was common land for all the villagers of the Woottons. The upland common was kept chiefly for the sheep, so the cows were grazed on the lower slopes, and in the marshy ground round Nether Wootton. The twenty cows did well, and the bailiff told the envious villagers that John had made a profit of £20 apiece. The villagers kept, as a rule, but one or two cows on the common pasture, though village custom set no limit to the number each family might have there. The year following John Corbet's lucky one, every man turned out two, some as many as ten. John himself increased his herd from twenty to forty.

The result may easily be guessed. There was not enough pasture for such a vast herd, and instead of flourishing every beast grew thin and poor, and fell an easy victim to a disease called the moor-evil. John lost as much as he had previously gained, everybody quarrelled with everybody else for overcrowding the moor. Yet, as it was every one's land, it was hard to say where the blame lay.

John strode off in a rage to Wootton Abbas to see Lord Cotswold, more familiarly known as "Farmer George." He was now a very old man, but still took a great interest in the affairs of the county. John went to ask him for advice and help in preparing a petition to Parliament to enclose the commonable lands of Wootton. He knew that this was being done all over the country by the larger landowners, who wanted to farm their own land in new ways. He pointed out, respectfully, that Lord Cotswold himself would gain some land by enclosure. For, though Wootton Abbas had been an enclosed village since the sixteenth century, it still retained rights on the common waste. John knew that what he wanted was expensive, that much of the land would need to be drained before it could become profitable, but he thought he could afford to pay his share, and was sure that ultimately it would mean wealth for him. Secure in the promise that Lord Cotswold would do what he could, John Corbet returned home to Wootton Manor farm.

The first the villagers heard of the scheme was when a meeting was called, and they were asked to sign a petition to Parliament asking for enclosure. It was an October day, and very wet. The villagers were invited into the hall of Wootton Manor Farm. This was still used as a living-room, part sitting-room, part dining-room, part kitchen. Now the benches and long oak tables were pushed back against the wall to make room, and Lord Cotswold, John Corbet, and Farmer Fletcher stood in front of the great open fire that blazed on the hearth.

Joe Tucker was there with his father, and they stood together rather sullenly. John Corbet was too impatient and pushing a man to be very popular with the village people. Things new and strange they very much disliked, and a meeting of this sort had never been heard of before. Through the door Joe could see all the lesser folk of the village, the Doelittles, the Broadribs, the

Dyers, and a ragged family that had but recently become squatters within the boundaries of the parish. These were convinced that mischief was afoot. They treasured their common rights, which allowed them to cut turf for firing, and to gather wood, as well as to pasture such creatures as they had. Many of them had brought ugly-looking sticks in case of need.

At last Lord Cotswold began to speak. Much of what he said was difficult to hear; more was scarcely understood. Joe gathered that every one was to be very well off, and, if they could prove their right to a share in the common lands, pasture, arable, or waste, each man should have a fair proportion all to himself. Joe remembered what bad strips of land had fallen to their lot the year before. They had previously been allotted to a drunken old man who had allowed couch-grass and thistles to encroach, and this had meant days of extra work for him, before the land was clean again. Joe thought there might be something in the new scheme, but that nothing should be done in a hurry.

Lord Cotswold talked of the poor state of the common, and how much it needed draining. He said that experts would come down from London to do this. Here Joe tugged his father's smock and whispered: "Who'll be paying for all this, do you think?" Unfortunately, his whisper came out very loud, and Lord Cotswold stopped speaking to glare in his direction. Joe was too much abashed to say more.

In spite of this misgiving, Joe would have been ready to put his mark to the petition when the time came, but his father said doggedly that they were better as they were. Joe was prepared to take his father's view, and not hurry into so big a change. Joseph stood his ground when called on to put his mark below that of Farmer Fletcher, said that they were all poor men, and could not afford risks, and tried to make his son's point about the expense of draining. His friends stood by him, but they were no match for their more eloquent opponents. At last Joseph lost his temper, banged one fist into the palm of his hand with an oath, and stamped his way out of the room. His neighbours followed him, and the few supporters of the petition were left alone. . . . After their departure Lord Cotswold said to John Corbet reassuringly, "The Bill should go through quite easily. I have had some experience of these matters, and it seems to be

only the signatures of the larger landowners that are really wanted."

And so it came about that commissioners arrived in Wootton Courcy and set to work measuring and digging; and the villagers were filled with impotent rage. It was too late now to send a counter petition to Parliament, as some villages had



SIMPLE SAM IN THE STOCKS

done. Simple Sam, the goose-boy, sensed the general distrust and anxiety, and was set in the stocks for throwing stones at the newcomers. More intelligent people wanted to see what would happen, and it was a long time before the commissioners declared themselves ready to conduct the redistribution of the land. When they were ready the village assembled as before. Lord Cotswold, the Church, and John Corbet were awarded their share. The villagers could certainly not have worked out the sums of

proportion and fractions necessary to decide how much of the six thousand acres Lord Cotswold and John Corbet should have; nor could they have managed similar sums for other members of the community. What they did notice was that John Corbet's lands were in a compact and convenient mass round his own farm, and that they included a fine share of the stream and the best fishing.

An excellent plot was awarded to the Tuckers, and Joe was all for taking possession at once, and pacing it out. He wanted to compare his luck with his neighbours. But the commissioners had not finished. They had to consider the cost of enclosing, and their statement of expenses staggered John Corbet himself. Here are some of the items :—

	£	s.	d.
Act of Parliament	300	0	0
Fences (part wall, part quick-sets); rhynes (ditches)	350	0	0
Gates, etc.	56	0	0
Commissioners	200	0	0
Surveyor	80	0	0

It was not much comfort to Joe to reflect that he and his father had been right. It was but slowly that the villagers took in the meaning of all these strange figures, and the things the commissioners were saying. Slowly the truth dawned. Not only must each villager before he possessed his land pay for the fencing of it, but also he must pay for his share of the expense of draining and the rest, and this worked out at £2, 10s. an acre. The Tuckers looked at each other in dismay. The money for one acre would not have been easy to raise. They had lost heavily on the cows dead of the "moor-evil," and there was no spinning money now.

Lord Cotswold began to speak. It seemed he was making an offer. £5 for any plot of land a man would like to sell. Joseph glowered. He had not wanted the commissioners to come; he wanted his land, and his own way of life. But the bill had to be paid, and he could not contribute his share, so his land would have to be sold.

The people of Nether Wootton came up eagerly to sell. £5 would go as far then as £15 or £20 now, and they thought only of the present. Joan hid the money her man received under the

goose-feather mattress, but the Nether Wootton people turned into the ale-house with their money in their pockets. They shouted and sang and cheered the commissioners, and declared they had made their fortunes.

John Corbet went home well content. He felt that his dearest wish had been fulfilled, and dreamed good dreams about prosperity, and splendid crops, and prize cows such as Lord Cotswold himself had never seen bettered. Lord Cotswold, who had known John from boyhood was pleased too. He liked to feel that in this village the scientific farming so dear to his heart would supersede the clumsy old ways. The men of the parish, too, would learn habits of industry, in the employment of John Corbet, there would be no more loitering after their own wretched geese and lean cows on the common, no more waste of potentially fertile land.

Arriving at Wootton, Lord Cotswold climbed heavily from his chaise, for he grew gouty. Over an ample meal and excellent wine he discussed the excellence of the day's work with the parson of Wootton Courcy who was his guest that night. Late that night the parson returned home, trusting to the wisdom of his old brown mare to take him there in safety, and Lord Cotswold's manservant carried his master to bed.

CHAPTER XXI

ARMY AND NAVY

"A ship is worse than a jail. There is, in a jail, better air, better company, better convenience of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea-life, they are not fit to live on land."

(DR. JOHNSON, 1776.)

"The confusion this morning at leaving Valdivia was very great, and among the soldiers' wives the distress was dreadful. One poor soul had a child. . . . I placed her and the infant, with another poor helpless soul into one of my ammunition waggon."

27th December 1806.

(The retreat to Corunna. From the diary of an officer in the Royal Horse Artillery. Unpublished.)

WHEN William Corbet was seven years old he was brought to Lyme Regis, there to wait for the arrival of his sailor father Thomas Corbet, who would come, he was told, in his ship and take all his family to America. William went to the Cobb every day to watch for sails. Even the excitement of watching the fishing fleet come in was as nothing to seeing one's father's ship arrive. When he had been reminded that the ship could not possibly come that day he consoled himself with the company of the fishermen. He watched the shining fish being brought ashore, heard the fish-wives bargaining, and saw the fish of the day's catch put into baskets and taken away on pack-horses to London.

Thomas Corbet came at last, and took his wife and family on board. There were no liners in those days to take people to America in comfort and safety in six days, and Sarah Corbet was quite undaunted at the prospect of eight weeks at sea in a man-of-war. Her husband was a naval captain, and his family had served in the Army and Navy for generations (his grandfather, Henry Corbet, had fought at Blenheim). They were accustomed to living nowhere in particular, and Sarah, like a dutiful wife, accepted this tradition as her own.

She had need of all her fortitude in the weeks that followed

Storms of hail and snow beat against the ship. The deck and the rigging were covered with ice. The ship could make little progress, for the ropes were so encrusted with ice and snow, that they were three times their natural size and quite unmanageable. There was even ice in the ship itself, and there was danger worse than the intense cold to be feared from that. The weight of it, added to the heavy rolling, might well burst the sides. One of her elder boys told her the sailors were passing hawsers under the ship, hoping to bind her together against the thaw. It seemed but a frail hope of safety so far from land, but the ship was built of good oak timber, and at last arrived safely in America. The children, the servants, the luggage, even furniture, were safely brought on shore.

When, after a few years in America, it was time to return home, Thomas Corbet had already put four sons into the Navy, and one into the army of the East India Company. A daughter had married an American colonist, living in Rhode Island, and yet another son, William, was allowed to stay with her and go to school.

William Corbet enjoyed his life on his brother-in-law's estate. It was worked by slave-labour, as was then the custom, and he once went with him to Newport, the biggest town on the island, to buy slaves. The dealer's name was Allbones. Few people considered the rights and wrongs of this trade, a subject which convulsed America a century later. At the moment, the trade seemed a natural and desirable state of affairs. When William Corbet was in Rhode Island, discussion turned not on the freedom of slaves, but on the freedom of the American colonists from British "tyranny." They thought they should be much more independent of the Home Government, and before William Corbet, at the age of thirteen, left America to become a midshipman in the Navy, the quarrel had become serious. His first voyage from England was with dispatches to the colonists from the mother country. He was at sea four months before the dispatches had been delivered, and the answer returned. Such a long delay did not make the quarrel any easier to settle, for neither side could see the other point of view, and it was not easy to explain matters to such distant people.

In 1775 war was declared. GEORGE III tried to compel the

loyalty and obedience of his American subjects, as KING CHARLES I had once tried to coerce his people. This new civil war lasted for eight years, and its end was the beginning of the independent United States of America.

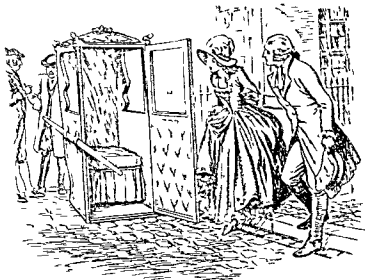
Thus William Corbet saw active service at fifteen. On one occasion he was ordered to the mast-head to report on the progress of a landing party, sent on shore to silence a rebel battery. The shot whistled in the rigging, and he felt a large target for enemy bullets. He wondered if men he had once known were in the rebel battery, and hoped he was not forgotten clinging up there aloft to the seaward side of the mast. When at last he was ordered down, he descended rapidly by the back-stay, and skinned both hands in his swift descent.

His life on board was a rough one. If the crew did not starve as they had starved in the reign of CHARLES II, their food was of the coarsest. Men fell ill with scurvy from lack of fresh food; sometimes drinking water could only be obtained by catching the dew in blankets; sometimes it had to be strained through bunting before it was drinkable. A midshipman, unable to get bunting, might well have to use his teeth as a filter. Ships on the transatlantic journey usually put in at the Azores, to take on board wine and oranges, a valuable addition to their daily fare of salt beef and ship's biscuit.

Naval discipline was rough and stern, and long before he saw active service William Corbet had grown accustomed to death. He had seen the captain's clerk hanged from the yard-arm for embezzlement, and another man reprieved only when the noose was round his neck. William thought this an excellent opportunity of discovering how it felt to die, for the reprieved man was only convinced with difficulty after his release that he was not dead. William was disappointed to find the fellow taciturn and uncommunicative.

William Corbet did not spend his whole life in the Navy. At seventeen his father decided to send him to Woolwich Academy, and when he had spent two years there he was commissioned in the Royal Horse Artillery. In spite of the gaps in his education, two months' coaching in mathematics were considered sufficient to secure him an entrance, nor did he fail to pass out at the end of his course. His eleven-year old brother George was already a

cadet there, resplendent in the scarlet and blue uniform, with the white kersymere breeches, and gold laced cocked hat of that day Sarah Corbet was delighted to have her two surviving sons in safety for a time. She had already lost four of her sons. Two were killed in the American War, a third had died of smallpox, and the last in a duel. When the American War came to an end, she fervently hoped that there would be no more fighting for many years, there



THE WEALTHY BANKER'S DAUGHTER

had already been no less than three wars in her lifetime, and it seemed reasonable to suppose that now England would enjoy a long period of peace.

While the peace lasted, it was a gay period for William Corbet. He spent several leaves in the fashionable city of Bath. There he learnt to dance the minuet, drank the waters, attended the baths, and fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy London banker. The days of child betrothals had long passed, but stern fathers still considered it their duty to accept or refuse an offer

of marriage made to a daughter. Captain William Corbet felt that he had little reason to be received with enthusiasm by a cantakerous and purse-proud old man.

He journeyed up to London to ask for the hand of Susan, the banker's eldest daughter, and decided to ride, the weather being fine and frosty. But towards evening his horse cast a shoe, and it began to rain. Determined to get on at all costs, he hired a post-chaise and made the next stage in that. The rain was incessant, and the hired post-chaise not only let water through the roof, but seemed in danger of falling to pieces. It was a chilly October evening, and his spirits sank lower than ever. He regretted bitterly that he had not waited for the mail coach, and travelled by that, for the mail coach could make the journey in thirteen hours. He reached an inn at last, found a good supper and a blazing fire, and determined to stay there till the mail coach arrived next day.

The banker received him haughtily, at his opulent country house in Streatham; having inquired into his means he remarked with disfavour that his head clerk had a better income. Nothing that Captain Corbet could say would move him. Some weeks later his wife and daughters returned from their visit to Bath, and implored him to be merciful. Susan declared weeping that she was determined to marry the man of her choice. At last her father sent for her and for Captain Corbet. He told his daughter for the last time that she must choose between her home and her lover; if she persisted in her obstinacy, she must leave his house for ever. He was immensely proud of his firmness and determination, but if he hoped to quell his daughter he was disappointed. She was married secretly that same week, and Miranda, her romantic youngest sister, ran away from home quite unattended, and came to the wedding. Miranda had to eat bread and water for a week as a punishment, and do nothing but cross-stitch. Three years later she herself ran away, and was married at Gretna Green. . . .

In 1793, when WILLIAM PITT was Prime Minister of England, war was declared on France. Captain Corbet had to leave his wife and young baby in England, and sail with the artillery for the Netherlands. It was perhaps as well that he could not know, in those early days of the French Revolutionary Wars, that the baby

son whom he was leaving at home in 1793, would be killed in battle beside him before a lasting peace was made ¹

William Corbet fought with distinction in the Netherlands, in Egypt, and finally in Spain. He rose to the rank of colonel, and was commended for his gallantry and efficiency by SIR RALPH ABERCROMBIE, and by SIR JOHN MOORE, both of whom lost their lives fighting against NAPOLEON. At home in England prices rose every year, and poverty became an increasingly serious problem. People complained (as is usual, and very often true), that the Government was inefficient, extravagant, and corrupt. When the future DUKE OF WELLINGTON was sent to the Peninsula with an army, people grumbled that another expensive and fruitless attempt was being made to crush the power of the Corsican soldier whose genius had made him Emperor of the French, and ruler of half Europe.

Colonel Corbet served in Spain under the DUKE OF WELLINGTON. Every one in the army respected the new commander-in-chief, who owed his position to ability, and not, as was too often the case, to influential relations. The raw material of his army were "ne'er-do-wells" and unwilling recruits made by the pressgang, but out of it he made a disciplined force that at last defeated the generals of NAPOLEON. He forced his men to treat with consideration the country people. They were not allowed to forage for food without paying for everything that they took.

The position of the English improved but slowly, and it was years before the French were finally driven from Portugal and Spain, and the south of France occupied by British troops. Before that time came, Colonel Corbet's son and namesake had joined his father in Spain, with a commission in the R.H.A. Six months after his arrival, Colonel Corbet was wounded in action. His leg was badly shattered, and the army surgeon declared that immediate amputation was the only remedy. There was no staff of army nurses to receive the wounded, no dressing-stations, no chloroform, no antiseptic. The surgeon was ready to operate on the field. As no one was available to hold a candle for him, Colonel Corbet volunteered to be his own link boy. He produced a wax candle from his pocket, and said that a light could be obtained

¹ The French Revolutionary Wars lasted from 1793 to 1802. The Napoleonic Wars from 1803 to 1815.

from the slow matches beneath his guns. He remembered grimly how often in the mess the surgeon had been laughed at for his alleged rusty old knives. He wished the canon ball had found a more vulnerable spot, and left him dead, or at least, unconscious, but he maintained an attitude of calm indifference in the worst of his sufferings. He was carried in to a Spanish house to be nursed, where for many weeks his life was in danger. He was not only suffering from the shock of amputation, but the festering of the wound, the common result of the simplest surgical treatment before antiseptics were invented. He asked repeatedly for his son, and for news of the fighting. He was told that on the day of his wound there had been a great victory, but that his son had been killed.

And in England, a week later, a crowd gathered, pleased and excited, to see the mail coaches leave the Post Office. The mail coaches were "going down with victory" through all the great roads of England, through suburbs and through country towns. There were oak leaves in the hats of the scarlet-coated guard, and these victorious laurels told Sophia Corbet, Colonel Corbet's small daughter, that there was news from Spain. She lived with her mamma on the route of the west country coach, and was accustomed to watch it thundering past every day; she went running in to tell the news. "The guards were all decorated, like the last time our soldiers won a victory, and every one was shouting, and excited. Will my good brother and my dear papa soon be home?"

CHAPTER XVII

RIOTS AND RICK-BURNING

" A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization. Gentlemen were pretty much alike in all countries, the condition of the lower orders, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination "
(DR JOHNSON, 1775)

*' I grant indeed that field and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms,
But when arid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place
By such examples taught, I paint the cot,
As truth will paint it, and as bards will not*

*Will you praise that homely, healthy fare
Plenteous and plain that happy peasants share?
Oh! trifle not with wants you cannot feel,
Nor mock the misery of a stinted meal,
Homely, not wholesome, plain, not plenteous such
Is you who praise would never deign to touch "*

(CRABBE, *The Village*, 1783)

AFTER the enclosure of Wootton Courcy John Corbet prospered. Since the villagers had no longer any common land, he experienced no difficulty in getting labour. He had long had a great ambition, in common with many farmers of his time, he wanted to live like a fine gentleman. He hoped one day to be able to rebuild the old manor, that straggled round four sides of the courtyard, and live in something less rambling and old-fashioned. He dressed well, in good west country broadcloth, and on Sunday particularly he and his family appeared most obviously prosperous. He gave his wife a dress made of silk, woven at Spitalfields, as grand as Lady Cotswold could have had. His daughter wore a high-waisted, long frock of flowered muslin, very fine. This had come from the new looms in Lancashire, and was a rare curiosity in Wootton. His eldest son, Jonathan, was a source of mingled pride and anxiety to the old man. He himself had thought of little but farming when he was a boy,

but young Jonathan was passionately fond of hunting, and time and money were spent on that. He liked his shooting, too, like any lord, and woe betide any villager who was found poaching. John Corbet would have liked to put all the money he made into improvements, or invest it in some of the new industries that were springing up, but he found that much of it slipped away in the effort to maintain a more ambitious standard of living.

John Corbet felt himself to be very modern, and prided himself on keeping abreast with the times. Yet his children and even his grandson, Roger, were brought up on traditions and stories and customs ages old, much as their ancestors had been. Witches were no longer burnt by law in the market-place of Wootton-on-the-Fosse, but old beliefs in witchcraft and old fears of spells still lingered among country people.

Roger was a delicate baby, and was still crawling on the stone flags of the hall at an age when most children are running about. His grandmother said he would never thrive till he was passed through a willow sapling, and though she dared not say so to her matter-of-fact husband, Martha, his mother, was inclined to agree. Early one morning, therefore, Roger Corbet (future Member of Parliament, and industrial magnate of Manchester), was carried out into the garden to a willow sapling by the stream. This had been split overnight, and the child was passed three times three through the cleft. When the child had been hurried back to his oak cradle by the fire, Martha bound up the young tree as she would have bound up a newly-grafted apple twig, with clay smeared on the wound.

The willow survived this maltreatment and grew strong. Though John affected to be very angry when he heard what had been done, it was noticed that he took particular care of that willow, and never allowed it to be pollarded. He knew the old superstition well enough, that the life of his grandchild was henceforward magically bound up with the life of the tree, and that they would prosper or perish together.

There is no doubt that Roger grew stronger, and his grandmother congratulated herself on her wisdom. When smallpox visited the Manor Farm, and all the children fell ill, Roger alone escaped the infection. Some said that it was because he had caught cow-pox (a mild disease) in the dairies, for this was said

to save people from worse infection Martha Corbet was sure it was the good influence of the willow tree

Her success encouraged her to take the advice of a wandering pedlar who had a mysterious cure for the scars of smallpox, which had quite spoilt the prettiness of Roger's sister Sue. He advised that a dead toad should be hung round her neck, and declared that as the toad withered and dried, so the soreness and scars that disfigured the child would disappear. At the end of two days, Sue said that she would rather have smallpox all over again than wear the horrid thing. Roger helped her bury it, so the experiment was never completed.



SUE CORBET

Roger had a happy childhood in Wootton, and looked back on it as the best time of his life. For the villagers' children there seemed to be no best times left in the world. The village had never prospered since the enclosures, many families had left the place altogether, and many of the cottages in Roger's Row stood empty. No cloth was now washed in the stream, no spinning-wheels were busy at the doors of the cottages on sunny days. Industry had gone to the town of Wootton-on-the-Fosse. The people had followed, or had sought work further afield in the new coal mines of Gloucestershire, or in the factories of the north.

The men who stayed in their own home were landless day labourers, working for Farmer John Corbet and his son Jonathan, or for Farmer Fletcher. Such was Joe Tucker, who had married Jinny, one of the Elworthys, and who was living in the tumbledown cottage that had once belonged to the Doelittles. Though they had been a long while in the parish, the Doelittles were unable to prove their common rights there, and had been dispossessed. Joe Tucker's rent was lower than the rent in Roger's Row, where his father and mother still lived and struggled to make ends meet.

They, and Farmer Fletcher, had considered that Joe should have put off marrying until his prospects were better. Six shillings a week was little enough for two, and if he were out of work for any reason, there would be neither savings nor the common land

to fall back upon. Joe worked from six o'clock till six o'clock in summer, and during daylight in winter. He could make no extra money at a trade (such as rope-making, or carpentering), as many men who worked their own land in their own time had once done.

In 1793 the wars against the French broke out, and at once the cost of living began to rise, and the struggle to live became harder than ever. Joe did not mean to see his children go hungry (he had three by 1794), and took to poaching. One of his brothers used to go with him, and they would bring in rabbits and pheasants from Lord Cotswold's preserves. He had felt a grudge against Lord Cotswold ever since the day when Tom, his brother, had gone to the copse as usual to get firewood, and had been told that next time he showed himself there stealing he would go to prison. The villagers still felt that the "commonable woods and wastes" were really their own, even if they had been forced to sell them to the earl, and Joe felt no shame in taking what he could.

One night a gamekeeper caught Tom, and he was sent into Wootton-on-the-Fosse for trial. Poaching was on occasion punished by death, for crimes against property were visited severely. Tom, however, was not hanged, but deported to Botany Bay, in the recently discovered territory of New South Wales. On board his ship were many countrymen sentenced for rick-burning and hedge-breaking, as well as poaching. There were townsmen too, who had been members of secret societies, supposed to be plotting rebellion, as well as desperate criminals, murderers, forgers, and footpads.

So far from making Joe afraid to poach, this event only made him more eager for the dangerous sport. Sometimes he would rouse his spirits for the adventure at the village ale-house, and then the money for the family ran very short indeed.

In 1795, the poverty of "the labouring poor" all over England had become a matter of general anxiety. In Parliament, WHITBREAD produced a bill to secure a minimum wage for every labourer, but this was thought to be an old-fashioned attempt to interfere between master and man, and to be very bad for the well-being of the country.

Joe and his family were living on bread and cheese, garden stuff, and dumplings, which they washed down with a brew of tea. At the workhouse the weekly allowance per man was as follows :—

	£	s	d
7 lb bread	0	1	0
9 oz cheese	0	0	3
$\frac{1}{2}$ oz butter	0	0	$0\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>		
	0	1	$3\frac{1}{2}$

These necessities, multiplied by five for Joe's family, would take no less than 6s $4\frac{1}{2}$ d of his week's money. But he only earned 6s 9d. Even at the workhouse they occasionally had beer, tea, meat, and vegetables. Only the last could Joe get from his own garden. He enjoyed his midday meal at the farm-house at Nether Wootton when he actually had meat, and these meals were a valuable addition to his wages. Even so it was hard to find a rent of sixpence a week, and buy enough fuel to boil the pot. As for illness, clothes and pleasure, Joe's family had to do without the last, and depend on charity for the first two.

He hated accepting old clothes from the Fletchers and the Corbets, for he felt he had a grudge against them both, but his children had to be clothed.

It was in the winter of 1794-95, that discontent in Wootton came to a head. There was positively no firing to be bought, and the woods were carefully preserved. The people of Nether Wootton were the roughest and most dangerous. There had been unemployment and actual starvation there. Men and women broke into the woods and tore down the new hedges, they visited John Corbet's farm, and set fire to his ricks. They could not afford to buy his meat, and they suddenly determined that since that was so he should not profit by it.

Cottagers who had not seen a good blaze on their own hearths all that long, hard winter, saw the sky that night lit up by the blazing of the good corn. They had no hope that any appeal to Parliament or King could relieve their desperate needs, and they meant instead to make someone suffer, to voice their protest in the only way they knew.

It was well for Joe Tucker that he himself was not concerned in the outrage. He was off poaching in Abbey wood, the property of Lord Cotswold. When he saw the terrible blaze he realized that more than ricks would be burnt that night. For the ricks were near the farm buildings, and the farm buildings adjoined the house.

itself. He did not hurry to the help of the Corbets, though the fire spread from stables to bedrooms, and the children were soon standing bewildered, watching the devouring flames from a safe distance.

John Corbet was an old man, and never recovered from the night of the fire. Many of the people of Nether Wootton followed Tom Tucker to Botany Bay, and some were hanged in Wootton-on-the-Fosse for all to see.

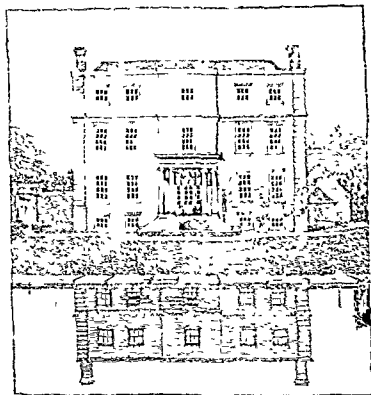
It was left to Jonathan to see if he could still work the farm. He was determined not to be beaten by the hostility of the villagers. Lord Cotswold was sympathetic; a younger brother in business in Wootton advanced him money; somehow he managed to rebuild, and to carry on the farm. In his determination not to be humbled he built a house almost as fine as the one his father had dreamed of. He built it of brick too, in the style that we call to-day "Georgian," a house that any man would be proud to own. It had to be mortgaged, however, as his son Roger was later to find to his cost. There was no more hunting for Jonathan Corbet, but the war prices were good for farmers, and wheat and wool fetched record prices for twenty years to come.

In 1795 the magistrates met in the Berkshire village of Speenhamland to try and solve the problems of low wages and discontent in their own district. They hit on the plan of making up wages out of the rates to such a sum as a man could live on. They drew up a scale showing how much relief a man should get, allowing for the wages he received, and the size of his family.

Joe Tucker was very loth to receive money from the poor rate to make up his wages. The Tuckers had held their heads high in the past, and were accustomed to dispense the poor rate (as overseers of the poor), not to receive it themselves. Yet he could not by his unaided efforts compel Farmer Elworthy to raise his wages, and there were strict laws against strikes and combinations of workers. He therefore took the money, and there was less discomfort in the little cottage henceforward. Gradually Joe and the other villagers grew accustomed to being treated as semi-paupers, and having their wages made up to subsistence level out of the rates. Joe's son accepted the curious system as a matter of course, and would have thought any change most unjust. Independence was forgotten.

When Joe's father and mother grew too old to work, the cottage

in Roger's Row stood empty. Joe was the only one of their sons who had stayed in the village, and he could not afford to support them. Old Joseph and Joan, his wife, sadly packed up their few



JONATHAN CORBET'S NEW BRICK HOUSE

possessions, and Joe drove them in to the workhouse in Wootton-on-the-Fosse. They thought sadly of how they had looked after Joe's grandfather when he was feeble, and of that wonderful golden age when they were young, when the Tuckers had owned their own land, and held their heads high.

CHAPTER XXIII

PROGRESS AND POWER

"On the Grand Junction (Canal) a succession of barges followed each other, freighted with the various branches of traffic, transported from inland manufactories to London. Flyboats, heavy barges, and coal-crafts were passing in rapid succession."

"Inland navigation, to a manufacturing country, is the very heart's blood and soul of commerce."

(J. HASSELL, *Tour of the Grand Junction Navigation*, 1819.)

"What person would ever think of paying anything to be conveyed from Hexham to Newcastle in . . . a coal-waggon, upon a dreary waggon-way . . . dragged . . . by a roaring steam-engine?"

(*The Tyne Mercury*, 16th November 1824. Quoted from *Lives of the Engineers*, by S. SMILES.)

WHEN the people of Wootton no longer owned their own land, and had no share in the common, there was little inducement for them to remain in their own homes. Wages were low and food was dear, and the younger men began to leave the village in search of work and adventure elsewhere. The cottages, even in the main street, stood empty, and the tumbledown home of the Doelittles on the common was used by Jonathan Corbet as a cattle shed. The Doelittles and other families went to live in Wootton-on-the-Fosse, where Reuben Brown's new water-mill provided plenty of work for people who were not too proud to work in a factory, who were content to exist on the meagre wages that were offered, and eke them out by letting their children work fourteen hours a day side by side with the workhouse apprentices.

John Dyer was turned out of his cottage by Jonathan Corbet, who wanted to cultivate the land on which it stood. Since the commissioners had drained it, the land showed possibilities of becoming productive. Dyer loaded his few possessions on his barrow, his wife wrapped the baby in a shawl, and the family set out. It was said that there was work in the Welsh coal-mines, so they tramped westwards. There were others besides themselves

on the roads Welsh cattle-drivers on their way to London; poor Irish who had come to England to make their fortunes, and country people like themselves, for everywhere village land was being enclosed, and country people were migrating to towns and mining areas

After many adventures the Dyers settled at last in Wales.



THE DYERS SET OFF TRAMPING TO WALES

They were very poor, and one room in a four-roomed cottage was all they could afford. The elder child was seven, and was considered quite old enough to go down the mine with her father, the money she earned was enough to keep her in the bread and tea that was the staple diet of the family. Children had worked in the village of Wootton, helping to card the wool, and to mind the geese, so it seemed reasonable that they should also work in the coal-mines. It was horrible work, however, that she now had to do. In the winter she went down the mine at daybreak and came out after dark. All day she sat in the dark and opened

and shut a trap-door for trucks to pass through. When she grew strong enough, she dragged the trucks, crawling through the dark passages like some strange earth-creature, and her little brother came into the mine and opened trap-doors. There was a new baby at home, and the family needed the money to get along at all. At night the sound of the strange pumping-engine that was worked by steam could often be heard when there was an excess of water in the mine. The children knew that if the pumping went wrong and the mine was flooded, it would mean death for every one working there. Sometimes, too, the gas in the coal caught fire, and miners were burnt; sometimes the roof fell in and they were killed or suffocated.

More fortunate in their new life after leaving Wootton were Abel Tucker (a younger brother of Joseph, the carpenter) and Peter and Seth Broadrib, who all three set off to London to seek their fortunes. They worked their way slowly eastwards, getting lifts in country carts on fortunate days. They entered London by way of the Oxford Road, past Tyburn gallows. They had nothing to fear from the cut-purses and vagabonds that lurked there, for they had scarcely enough money between them to pay for a night's lodging or an evening meal. Only rich men needed to travel that rough and lonely road with armed outriders beside their coaches, and pistols and a blunderbuss within easy reach.

Abel Tucker had learnt the trade of a carpenter in his father's workshop, and hoped that he would get work in his own line. The Broadrib brothers had no craft, but they were glad to see the world and take what came.

It was fortunate for Abel that in the year 1784, four years before he came to London, new mills had been started by RENNIE near Blackfriars, and a man who could use his hands and his head had an excellent opportunity not only of a job, but of experience in the very latest machinery invented. When Abel heard the word mill, he thought of the wind-mill at Wootton-on-the-Hill, where the wind did the work, or of Brown's water-mill in Wootton-on-the-Fosse that had begun work just before he left home. RENNIE'S mills were the most astonishing thing to Abel, and indeed to the whole world, for they were worked by the power of steam.

He took the work that was offered him, but felt more than a little afraid of the strange noise and clatter round him. It seemed unnatural to see great cranes moving heavy weights, fans scattering chaff, and grinding and sifting flour, all because of a snorting, puffing "fire-engine."

If Abel had lived in a coal-mining district, he would have known that the pumps to get the water out of the mines were worked by clumsy engines driven by steam. He might even have heard that JAMES WATT had so improved these that the possibility of using this powerful engine for other work besides pumping was beginning to be considered. RENNIE had just invented a series of machines that could be used with WATT's patent engine, and had built his model steam-mill on the banks of the Thames, known as the Albion Mills.

Here Abel worked. There was much to learn about the new engines, and Abel was quick to learn. His own special work was concerned with the making and mending of the wooden parts of the machinery, but he did his best to understand everything, both about the machines and the engines that worked them. He enjoyed his new life, though his work was heavy and for long hours, and the pay was low. He meant to get on, and he saw quite clearly that if he did not work hard no one but himself would care what happened to him, but that if he was efficient and lucky there were endless possibilities in the new world into which he had come. He heard with admiration and envy of the career of JOHN RENNIE who had designed the machinery of the Albion Mills. He was the son of a Scots farmer, who had begun life as a millwright. He had educated himself at Edinburgh University (earning his own fees by working as a labourer in the independent Scottish fashion), and was now employed by BOULTON & WATT, and had a great career before him as a civil engineer. (Before he died in 1821, RENNIE was famous for the bridges he built, the canals and docks and tunnels which his engineering skill devised, and for the draining of the wild fen country, for which he employed appropriate models of the all-powerful steam-engine.)

Many people came to see the Albion Mills, at Blackfriars. Some admired the marvel, and prophesied that soon the old methods of man-power, or at best of wind and water and horses, would be quite out of date, and that everything would be steam-

driven. Some said it was all against nature, and that God would punish such presumption. Others, again, said that trade would be ruined. Every one could not afford the expense and risk of installing steam-engines, and the old-established firms found that they could not compete with the prices at which the Albion Mills could afford to sell the flour they ground with such bewildering rapidity. The Albion Mills indeed drove a roaring trade for a time. The coal for the engines came as cheaply as it could come by way of the Thames; they were never forced to lie idle by reason of windless days; they had to fear neither flood nor drought. Orders were executed instantly, and the "fire-engines" were kept working all night if there was work for them to do. There were in those days no regulations about hours of work, or rates of wages, and other firms reduced the wages they paid to their employees in the attempt to compete. Thus it was that there was as much hatred as admiration for the new invention, and hot controversy raged round its value in industry.

One night, in 1791, when the mills had only been working a few years, Abel was roused by the shout of fire. He slept in a loft near by and came hurrying out to see the engines blazing, and RENNIE himself making despairing efforts to save his beloved machines. Next day, instead of the noise of thumping, snorting, and puffing from the engines, and the grinding of the machines, there was only the sound of men talking angrily, in the blackened ruins. They said to each other that whether the matter could be proved or not (and it never was), the fire had been no accident. . . .

Abel was now out of work, and his scanty savings soon used up. He had neither gild nor trade union behind him, for gilds were long obsolete, and friendly societies among the men were disliked by employers and distrusted by Government. Employers hated combinations of workmen, because they invariably demanded better wages; and the Government thought that working men were planning to revolt in England as the people of France had revolted, for the French Revolution had begun.

Abel was more fortunate than some of his friends in getting work. RENNIE himself had noticed him, and knew him for a clever workman, with the right spirit of ambition. When workshops were built on the ruins of the steam mill he took him on again. Abel Tucker did well, and at last succeeded in his dearest

ambition, which was to become an engineer. His only fault (in the eyes of his employers) was that he was always addicted to friendly societies. During the long war against the new French Republic, he was once suspected of having learnt to read in order to study the revolutionary doctrines of LOU PAINE. A society to which he belonged was suppressed by the Government, and some of the members were deported as convicts to the new British possession in Australia. Abel became a friend of FRANCIS PLACE, a tailor of Radical opinions, and supported him keenly in his desire, both for the reform of Parliament, and for the repeal of those laws which forbade workmen to combine and organize themselves in trade unions.

Meanwhile the Broadbribs were having a very different career. They had slept under arches and waggons in the city, and when they were lucky got work at the docks unloading ships. They had to fight for this, for the regular dockers fiercely resented any outside competition, but both the brothers had been famous in their own village for wrestling, and managed to give a good account of themselves.

Their strength, however, recommended them for work of a new kind. Canals were being made at this time all over the country to carry merchandise and digging out the channels for the new navigations, carrying the water over aqueducts, and taking it through tunnels gave plenty of employment to suitable men. The Broadbribs were privileged to become members of a "butty gang" that moved about the country, contracting for the removal of 'dirt'. They were a rough, fierce-looking company. They liked gay colours, and affected scarlet plush waistcoats and brilliant neckerchiefs. Each gang of these navigators or "navvies," as they were called, prided themselves on working faster and better than any other gang, and the gang of the Broadbribs was a company with many records to its credit.

Peter had to leave his friends after a few years owing to an accident which unfitted him for the heavy work. Hearing that Messrs Pickfords, a firm of carriers, wanted navigators on one of the finished canals (the Grand Junction), he applied for work on one of the barges. He was still able to lift weights, and could

¹ Similar gangs of "navvies" made the railway cuttings and embankments in the nineteenth century.

manage the locks. He started his first voyage from Paddington, a small village connected with the city by new water-ways. Warehouses had been built there, and the village was becoming quite well known. Peter found good ale and cheerful company at the "White Lion." Prize-fighters, navigators, drovers all frequented it. In one corner he saw a man surrounded by prize-fighters, who was said to be an artist. Peter had never heard of him, but his name was GEORGE MORLAND. He had clearly been drinking heavily, but he made no attempt to settle his score. He went out, saying he meant to have a lesson in prize-fighting, and told the landlord over his shoulder, that he would give him a picture to settle his account. The landlord seemed quite satisfied, for he knew how valuable MORLAND's pictures of animals and country people were.

The canal was a busy "thoroughfare," and Broadrib was warned not to hinder the "fly-barges" that passed them, and give way to them at all times, for the "fly-barges" were the light traffic, and travelled day and night with only ten tons to a boat, and had to average twenty miles a day. These passed laden with cotton goods from Manchester, and many other barges too; JOSIAH WEDGWOOD's porcelain from the pottery district; hay and coal for the capital, and beer and woollen goods from the north-east.

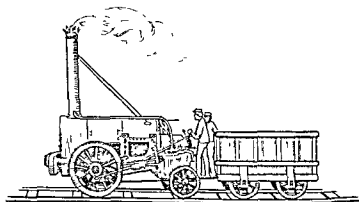
When the barge-train reached the Blisworth tunnel, the horses were relieved from the load they had pulled all the way from London and were led across the two and a half miles to join the canal again when it emerged from underground. Peter had to help pole the string of boats through the dark passage, and while he sweated and wished he was in daylight again, his work with his old gang enabled him to appreciate the skilful engineering shown in the building of this long tunnel.

At the great towns they passed on the way to Manchester, their destination, the barges stopped, and handed over their goods to distributing vans, and collected all that they could carry to take on with them. At some stopping places they had to leave goods behind, owing to lack of room, at others they were able to travel with half-laden barges.

They reached Manchester at last, having travelled at an average speed of two miles an hour. They disposed of their packages, and prepared to return with a cargo of cotton.

Peter liked the life of a bargee, or navigator, as he was officially

called. He married, and he and his wife worked a barge between them, and owned their own horse. They had six children, and the narrow cabin of the barge became a tight fit when the weather was too cold to sleep on the bank. Yet, as Peter had been accustomed to a crowded cottage at home, he was not unduly worried by this. His children were healthier than his own brothers and sisters had been, and as they were out of doors all day this was, perhaps, not unnatural. Peter was very fond of his family, and his four sons all became barge-owners when they grew up,



THE ROCKET, 1829

and his two daughters each married and went to live on barges with the husbands.

Now while Peter Broadribb had been navigating his barge, and thinking of little but his horse, and whether his goods were being rained upon, other people had been thinking out ways of making transport less leisurely than by canal. About the year 1822, the possibility of building a railway between Liverpool and Manchester was mooted. Peter had no great opinion of railways. He maintained that a horse could drag a

heavier weight in a barge than in a truck on wooden or even cast-iron rails, and any method other than the power of a horse for dragging along the railway trucks had never occurred to him.

It was not till the line was nearly finished that the company made up their minds to try the experiment of having a steam-engine to pull their trucks, though many people said that horses were much more practical. They determined to have a competition, and see what steam-engines could do. Peter was in the north at the time, and he went to Rainhill, near Liverpool, with his grandson to see the new engines put through their paces. He still did not think much of railways, and believed they would never be able to compete seriously with the canals, though the promoters of the new line said they meant if they could to make the canal proprietors lower their prices, and speed up their traffic. His grandson, Timothy Broadrib, was much excited. He induced his grandfather to take him twice to watch the engines, and was overjoyed when the one he had fancied (the Rocket, made by GEORGE STEPHENSON and his son ROBERT) finally won the competition.

The next year Timothy was among the huge crowds that assembled along a section of the new line to see the opening. The sad fact that one of the important men was killed by an engine only impressed the boy the more with its awful splendour and power. To travel twice as fast as the fastest stage-coach in the world seemed marvellous to him. There and then he made a great decision, and told his grandfather. He did not mean to have a barge, he would be an engine-driver; barges were too slow.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MAKING OF A COTTON LORD

" Manchester the greatest meet village in England Neither a
walled town, city, or corporation, they send no members to Parliament "
(DEFOE'S *Tour of England and Wales*, 1725-6)

" Where the high moorland thrusts itself between the woollen mills of York-
shire, and the cotton mills of Lancashire These windy moors, these
clanging dark valleys, these factories and little stone houses have
between them bred a race that has special characteristics Down there are
thousands and thousands of men and women who are stocky and hold them-
selves very stiffly

(J. B. PRIESTLEY *The Good Companions*, 1929)

His father had often said that Jonathan Corbet would come to a bad end. John was a hard-working, sober farmer, who thought of little but his land, but Jonathan liked to hunt, and to be friendly with gay neighbouring squires who lived beyond their means. He was not a man of business, and the farm was heavily mortgaged, and if wages were low, the poor rate was correspondingly high.

It was on Roger that the burden of his father's extravagance fell. When the French Wars ended in 1815, after the Battle of Waterloo, the price of corn dropped, and Roger was unable to make the farm pay.

By 1817, it was clear that he must sell the farm his people had owned so long and start again for himself in some more lucrative business. He was sorry for the men he had employed who were now thrown out of work, and wondered what would become of them. Some of them could find nothing better than the unskilled job of stone-breaking for the new roads; some of them made their way to London and to the mining districts, as others had done before them, others again went to the Potteries, now a thickly populated district with factories employing many thousands of work-people.

Roger himself took the London road, where he had an uncle in business who had promised him a clerkship. He began in a

warehouse in Watling Street, where calicoes and muslins were received from Manchester. Since the coming of the new machines it had been possible to weave cotton stuffs as finely as they were woven in the east, and Lancashire was doing a roaring trade. Ladies who would once have approved nothing but silk and fine linen and wool, now bought muslins even for their evening gowns. Roger learnt to know the most popular patterns and understand what was meant by a "pin-ground."

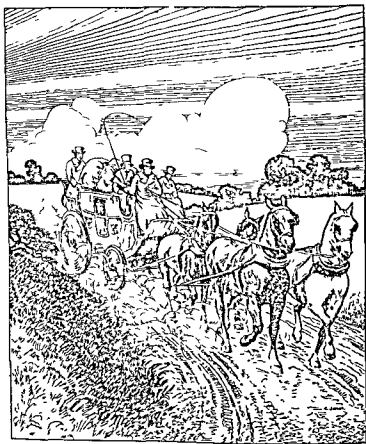
After a few years in the warehouse, Roger was promoted to the road, and travelled up and down the country with samples. He had often to do as much as forty miles a day, and the quickest means of conveyance was the mail coach. In dry weather, unless an accident happened, the London to Manchester journey took twenty hours. Roger travelled outside, as this was cheaper and also pleasanter. Muffled up in a thick coat, he enjoyed his journeys, but he had often long, cold waits in small towns, where there were no regular services, and where the roads had not been re-made by the new process invented by MACADAM, but were full of ruts and holes in summer, and quagmires and swamps in winter.

On occasion he had to travel by the new canals, a slow but pleasant way of getting about. On the Liverpool-Manchester canal, though the way was long there was plenty of traffic to watch: coal barges, and raw cotton coming to Manchester; salt from Cheshire; earthenware and porcelain from the Potteries; Burton ales that had come by canal through the Pennines; all going to the now important trading city of Liverpool.

The pride of his promotion to travelling soon forsook him, and he began to hope for something better. At last he determined to go into business himself, so he borrowed capital, found three other enterprising young men, and started a water-mill near Manchester.

In 1831 the duty which had made cottons expensive was at length repealed, and Roger Corbet determined to start power-mills in Manchester. Since the days of the Albion Mills, steam-power and the machines worked by the new engines had been much improved; every big firm used power, and everywhere the hand-workers were being reduced to extreme poverty. Roger was not, however, interested in the fate of the hand-loom weavers in the cotton industry, who had once done the work that machines in his new factory now performed rapidly and well. He was glad

to find that there were many people ready to take what work they could get at a very low rate of wages. Women and small children



THE MAIL COACH, 1820

were ready to work for long hours, and their labour was the cheapest of all. He soon began to make money, and could afford to live in the best part of the town, away from the noise and dirt of the

mills, and the squalid houses into which his work-people were forced to crowd.

Roger liked Manchester, where he felt well able to hold his own. It was a city for the vigorous and busy, a place where a man might make his fortune. The unbusinesslike, the lazy, and the unlucky "went to the wall." Roger was sometimes sorry for the obvious poverty of his work-people, but if he was to succeed as he intended to do, he could not stop to think whether they were content, and he must not offer them a penny more in wages than his fellow-employers, for that would have been disloyal, not to say freakish and absurd.

Roger found that to make money and to drive a hard bargain was the test of a man's worth in Manchester. He learnt never to pay a penny more than he could help for anything, and established himself as a good business man.

When he had time to spare from the rigours of business, and he worked as hard as any of his employees, he discussed politics with his friends. The reform of Parliament was the chief subject of interested discussion. Manchester by 1830 was a big and important manufacturing town, yet it sent no Member to Parliament. The Manchester business men thought it was time that the revolution in industry, that had made Manchester and the wealth of the new industrial north, was recognized by the Government. They were determined that the Reform Bill should go through, and supported the Whig party who, led by LORD GREY, were doing their best to force it on a Conservative House of Lords and an unwilling King.

The Tories hated the new towns of the north of England. They thought them ugly and vulgar, and to be new was a positive crime in their eyes. They were convinced that the country would be ruined if power passed from the hands of the landed gentry into the hands of the "new rich," whom they scornfully described as "cotton lords."

While Roger Corbet in the north country was earning for himself the half-derisive title of "cotton lord," many changes had been taking place in Wootton Courcy. Yet, by chance, the new owner of the Manor was still a Corbet. Colonel Corbet, of the Royal

Horse Artillery, had made up his mind to buy a house in the west country where he knew his family had once lived. He found the Manor Farm for sale, and thought Jonathan Corbet's fine brick house would make a suitable "gentleman's residence," where he might retire with dignity. His daughter, Sophia, kept house for him, she ordered his meals, and directed the four indoor servants. Her father had bought some of the old and unappreciated Corbet pictures which had been saved from the fire, and these now looked down on unaccustomed furnishings, on a grand pianoforte, and a harp, and Sophia's rosewood work-table, and flower-stands, all arranged by Miss Corbet to give "the proper air of confusion."

They lived quietly, for the colonel's wooden leg prevented him from enjoying field sports. He envied men who could tramp all day with their dogs and a gun, and who could train their own pointers and retrievers. If his son had lived, he thought sadly, he would have had dogs and hunters for him, and preserved his coverts strictly. As it was, his chief amusement was driving about the countryside. He had a carriage and pair for long distances, and a coachman to drive him, as was seemly, but he preferred to drive in his own curricle, and no equipage in the county was smarter, better driven, or better known. He had a Dalmatian carriage-dog (called Plum-pudding by the village boys) that ran tirelessly behind him, his constant companion. On Sundays, Sophia was expected to take Plum-pudding for a short walk. For the colonel would never have dreamed of putting in his horses on the day of rest, though he was very particular that a dog should have daily exercise.

Sophia frequently accompanied her father on his drives, especially when he went to Wootton-on-the-Fosse on shopping expeditions. The road had been re-made with small stones in the new way invented by MACADAM, and the drive was smooth and pleasant. On such occasions the colonel never failed to point out how the times had changed. Certainly the west country had lost its old air of busy prosperity, and was as different as possible from the crowded towns of the north. Only on Market Day did Wootton-on-the-Fosse awake from the new sleepiness that had come upon the place, and old inhabitants said that even Market Day was not what it had been. The Town Hall seemed

too big for the quiet town ; the two schools were only half full ; and churches and meeting-houses, once thronged, were sparsely attended.

Clothier after clothier had been forced to give up his business, and every time a factory closed down there was less work and more poverty among the townspeople. The shopkeepers were feeling the difference from the old days of prosperity when trade was brisk, and some of them too had put up their shutters. Reuben Brown's factory still struggled on, employing a few skilled workers, and many workhouse apprentices. Power had been installed (an expensive business), and "Prosperity" Brown's water-mill scrapped. Colonel Corbet never passed by if he could help it, for the factory chimney (that had been added to the old spinning-shed put up in "Prosperity" Brown's time) always smoked abominably, and the unnatural noise of the steam-engines frightened his horses. He would have been annoyed if his horses had liked the hideous smoke and noise, and thanked heaven that coal and iron were not so cheap and accessible in Wootton as in the new industrial north, where miles of good country were made abominable by the new methods. In Wootton, he declared, people had better stick to water-power, as Providence intended them to do. For the colonel had just got used to the idea of water-power, and forgot how recent that was in industry. He did not at all realize how fast the times were moving.

The old man found England in the eighteen-twenties a different place from the England that he remembered as a young man. He said that the villagers were not so cheerful as he remembered village people "before the war." Their May games and other village festivals were half-hearted, though they still danced a little at harvest time. They were less friendly too, and inclined to be sullen and suspicious. The people of Wootton were indeed become a sober and hungry people, barely existing on poor relief, the wages of labourers, and Lord Cotswold's game. Their firing they frequently stole from the colonel's woods. He declared the country was going to the dogs, that the poor rate was disgraceful and the poor idle and beggarly, and that someone ought to do something about it.

Sophia thought the villagers very picturesque in their ragged dress, and liked to make sketches of them. She was inclined to be

romantic about the life of "the peasants" as she liked to call them, and to feel that their simple life was very natural and beautiful. Sophia did not care for the simple lines of the new Manor, and never ceased to regret that the old one had been burnt down. Old Joe Tucker, before he went into the workhouse in Wootton-on-the-Fosse, told her that there had been a secret room in it, forgotten till the ruins were explored after the fire. People whispered, too, that the ghost of a young cavalier had been seen by night, in the old hall, hurrying across with something in his arms, vanishing mysteriously when he reached the fireplace. It all seemed exciting and romantic, like a chapter from the stories of MRS RADCLIFFE, or from one of the famous Waverley novels, which had recently been taking all Europe by storm.

Sophia was delighted to receive permission from Lady Cotswold to walk in the park of Wootton Place. She explored the ivy-covered ruins of the old Abbey, and, of course, sketched them. Lady Cotswold showed her a wonderful old book with beautiful pictures that had been found quite by chance when a willow tree of enormous age had been cut down. It must have been treasured by someone long ago.¹ Lord Cotswold had had it repaired, and treasured it greatly in his library. Sophia was somewhat afraid of Lady Cotswold, and examined this old book shyly. For Lady Cotswold was a magnificent old lady, said to be very "worldly", in her youth she had been famous for her beauty and her wit. In everything she did there was dignity, and it seemed to Sophia impossible that she should ever have felt at all shy, or ever have been in doubt as to the exact and perfect word or phrase or gesture.

Her visits to the park of Wootton Place ceased in the year 1831, by the peremptory order of the irritable old colonel. For the past five years as he read his *Times* by candlelight while Sophia sat beside him with her embroidery, he had been growing more and more agitated about the state of the country. His idea of a perfect Government was that the "Iron Duke" should be given a free hand in the Government. He was appalled at the restlessness and changes of the period. The Irish Catholics were allowed to vote, a most dangerous concession, the old man considered. Then in 1830 the Whig party came into power, and announced their

¹ See Volume II, Chapter XVI.

intention of reforming Parliament. "As if," the Colonel said to Sophia, "the British Constitution could possibly need any improvement." He had seen enough changes in his lifetime, and wanted all change to stop before it was too late.

One day he came driving home from Bath, and found a huge crowd on the village green of Wootton Courcy. For a moment he thought of riots, then he saw a carriage emblazoned with the arms of the Earl of Cotswold, and caught sight of the earl himself. He seemed to be speaking to the crowd. The colonel was deaf, but he soon found out from his groom, what he had already guessed, that a reform meeting was being held.

Colonel Corbet went into his own house in high displeasure. He would have no dealings with such revolutionary behaviour; he felt he had been insulted and that in his own village. He limped indoors and glared out at the assembled throng, where (as he saw it) that rascally Whig, Lord Cotswold, was demeaning himself by suggesting that affairs of State were the business of the "common people."

He forbade Sophia ever to visit Wootton Park again. Then this stern, unbending Tory routed out his Union Jack. He had never lived in a house where he had not set up a flagstaff, and with his own hands he now hauled up the flag.

Thus the ancient political cleavage was still manifest in the Corbet family. Nearly two hundred years earlier Sir Ralph had rallied to the support of CHARLES I, and had taken up arms against the Parliamentary forces for whom his cousin Francis fought. Now, more peaceably, did the Tory Colonel show his loyalty to KING WILLIAM IV, and his contempt for popular movements. In Wootton Manor, still, there lived a loyal subject of His Majesty the King.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

This list is merely a selection, for the most part standard political histories have been omitted, but those books specially suitable for a school library are marked with one asterisk those no such library should be without, with two. The editions quoted are not necessarily the latest or most complete, but those thought to be most suitable for school use

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The novels of Jane Austen

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